An exploration of afrocentric features at a black homeschool collective.

Tytianna Nikia Maria Wells
University of Louisville

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AN EXPLORATION OF AFROCENTRIC FEATURES AT A BLACK HOMESCHOOL COLLECTIVE

By

Tytianna Nikia Maria Wells
B.A., English, 2009
B.A., Pan-African Studies, 2009
M.A., Pan-African Studies, 2012

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education and Human Development
University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
Curriculum and Instruction

Department of Elementary, Middle & Secondary Teacher Education
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

December 2021
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A Dissertation Approved on

October 26, 2021

by the following Dissertation Committee:

___________________________________________
Dr. Michele Foster (Chair)

___________________________________________
Dr. Tasha Tropp Laman

___________________________________________
Dr. Dismas Masolo

___________________________________________
Dr. Shelley Thomas
DEDICATION

This dissertation is in:

Memory of my beloved daughter, Nadia Michelle

&

Honor of my mother, Le’Donna Maria Arnett

Thank you for instilling resilience and perseverance in me.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, Lord, for your unconditional love and protection throughout every moment of my life. Without you, I am nothing. I give all praise to you, forever. Amen.

In the words of the renaissance woman and my favorite poet, Dr. Maya Angelou, “This is a wonderful day. I have never seen this one before.” Throughout my college career at the University of Louisville since 2005, as an undergraduate student, I persisted despite the storms. I am thankful to God for granting me the strength to overcome struggles as a woman of uncompromised integrity and convictions.

Notwithstanding many obstacles and successes, including a marriage and divorce, hand injury that required surgery, a victim of sexual assault, the shooting of my brother—a survivor of gun violence—and a diagnosis of COVID-19 during the 2020 Global Pandemic, my faith in God remained strong. Only by God’s grace and mercy do I survive to tell the story. If I had a thousand tongues, I couldn’t thank God enough.

My journey to the Ph.D. has been nothing short of an obstacle course. However, I beat the odds and rose above adversity. I authored seven books and published books, published books for new authors, edited dissertations, facilitated professional development sessions, traveled internationally as a motivational speaker, and created intergenerational educational programs and grassroots organizations to help combat institutional and systemic racism and inequities. The path to the Ph.D. has been far from easy. However, in fortitude, I accomplished the most challenging educational experience that I have ever endured.

To my family—My Momma, Le’Donna Maria Arnett, her husband Alonza Arnett, my heavenly Father Tyrone Clifford Wells, Daddy Michael Ray Perry, brother Michael Tyler Perry, niece Aria Taylor Perry, Grandma Lorena Mosley, and many relatives in Louisville, Kentucky, and Detroit, Michigan—thank you for your love, support, and encouragement throughout my life. When the road was long and dark, your love, prayers, laughter, hugs, kisses, meals, and reassurance lifted me. I love you forever.

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To the University of Louisville’s Writing Center—Thank you so much for your patience, careful attention, and timely feedback on the various versions of my writing and dissertation throughout the years. To the Writing Center Staff and specifically, the following individuals who helped me along my journey to the Ph.D., I am forever grateful for your counsel and kindness:

Liz Soule Anna-Stacia Hailey Olalekan Adepoju Brice Montgomery

To my tribe and village throughout the years, thank you. Your prayers, calls, texts, social media posts, memes, and inspirational messages empowered me to keep moving forward, especially:

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Ashli Findley Jordana Smith Christie Welch
Michele Hemenway Pullen Greg Carmichael
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Southern Regional Educational Board Doctoral Fellows (SREB)
The de Paul School
To my students in Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) and YouthBuild Louisville—I am humbled and blessed to have witnessed your growth in completing our educational and professional goals together. Through struggles and triumphs, we survived. The family that we established will forever be in my heart. There were times when we felt like giving up but kept pressing forward anyway, times when we were unsure and prayed together, and times when we were at our breaking points and needed words of encouragement to heal the wounds. We were there for each other. Those moments meant a great deal to all of us, especially me. I needed those hugs, smiles, morning sermons, wise words, and you. As I have often said, whether you’re on the road to the GED or Ph.D., we will get through this together! I pray our time in the educational space was just as transformative for you as it was for me.

To Black Scholars Academy (BSA) teachers and students who rocked with me from the beginning—Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to study the heart and soul of this homeschool collective. I appreciate and love y’all!!

To Christopher Neal Ringstaff—Thank you for choosing me to love. God’s divine plan and timing are always best, and our devotion to each other proves that. I love you through and through. C & T, forever and always.

And, finally, to you, dear reader—May this dissertation educate, empower, and edify you along your life’s journey.

“That ugly part of your story you’re living through right now is gonna be one of the most powerful parts of your testimony.” – Unknown

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

– Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NIV Bible)
ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATION OF AFROCENTRIC FEATURES AT A BLACK HOMESCHOOL COLLECTIVE

Tytianna Nikia Maria Wells

December 17, 2021

This dissertation explores the development and benefits of familial relationships as the primary feature of Afrocentricity at Black Scholars Academy (BSA), a Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) through 12th-grade Black homeschool collective in the United States. This qualitative study draws upon Afrocentricity as a theoretical framework to analyze and interpret data collected from classroom observations, individual interviews with current and former teachers and students, and textual artifacts between July and November 2019. Familial relationships—an African time orientation, a personalized learning plan, OurStory, and Rising Meeting—are present in BSA. Familial relationships helped students develop cultural pride, agency, self-determination, independence, liberation through education, and a return to their traditional greatness. The employment of Afrocentricity as best practice in a homeschool collective is considered in this dissertation to be advisable across every educational context.

Keywords: Afrocentric education, Black schools, Black homeschools, Afrocentric homeschool collective, Afrocentric curriculum, Independent Black schools, Racial Protectionism
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“As another has well said, to handicap a student by teaching him that his black face is a curse and that his struggle to change his condition is hopeless is the worst sort of lynching.”
—Carter G. Woodson

The opening words of Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the Father of Black History and the second Black person to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1912, speak to the negative impact of racism, including self-hatred, in the identity of Black students in schools celebrating Europe and its people in the United States. This qualitative dissertation examines the features of Afrocentric education at Black Scholars Academy (BSA), a Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) through 12th-grade Black homeschool collective located in Louisville, Kentucky, in the U.S. This study draws upon Afrocentricity as a theoretical framework to analyze and interpret data from six full school days of classroom observations, individual interviews with current and former teachers and students, and textual artifacts which are teacher resources and content on a website at BSA.

The features of Afrocentricity and its benefits explored in this dissertation include familial relationships across BSA’s transformation into a Black Panther School during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years, and when BSA returned to its original Afrocentric model during the 2019-2020 school year. Data collected for this study spanned from July 2019 to November 2019. Familial
relationships arguably demonstrate evidence of best practices through African time orientation, personalized learning, the teaching of *OurStory* or Black history lessons, and Rising Meeting.

In this chapter, the national and localized history of Black education and the evolution of independent Black schools that Black people organized for themselves, including Afrocentric schools in the U.S., are briefly highlighted. This chapter contextualizes and contributes to a body of literature on race and Black educational options in the U.S., focusing on the history of independent Black schools, Afrocentric education, and the conditions of Black people who have educated themselves despite racial inequities. Eight sections encompass this chapter, including: (a) A Brief History of Black Education in the U.S.; (b) Afrocentric education; (c) Statement of Problem; (d) Purpose of Study; (e) Research Design; (f) Conceptual Framework; (g) Chapter Summaries; and (h) Conclusion. A brief national and localized history on Black education and the evolution of independent Black schools, including Afrocentric schools in the U.S., are traced in the following section.

**A Brief History of Black Education in the United States**

Black education in the U.S. across four eras—the Antebellum (1619-1865), Reconstruction (1865-1930), Jim Crow and Civil Rights (1930-1960), and the Black Power and Post-Civil Rights (1960-present) is explored. Structural obstacles and consequent acts of resistance are highlighted throughout each era in this chapter.

**The Antebellum Era (1619-1865)**
During the Antebellum or slavery era, Common Schools were the formal educational institutions created exclusively for wealthy White people in the United States (Fowler, 2013). Enslaved Black persons were legally prohibited from literacy. However, since their arrival to the US, Black people brought with them their own form of education through African cultural traditions including oral storytelling during an era of slave unrest and plantation insurrections. While there were many slave uprisings, one slave revolt led to Black anti-literacy laws. The 1739 Cato, Stono Rebellion, or Stono Slave Revolt, when slaves near Charleston, South Carolina convened with drums and killed over 20 White people, led to the passing of Black or Slaves Codes, anti-literacy laws against any method of education for Black people (Aubespin et al., 2011). However, these Codes didn’t stifle the Black community’s desire for literacy. They taught one another how to read and write in their slave quarters, as well as used trickery, found in trickster animal characters in stories, and bribery to acquire secret reading and writing lessons with spelling books, reading primers, or any type of reading material, which were often in poor conditions. The content of these reading materials was the least of the enslaved communities worries. However, there are some cases when enslaved Black persons sought to learn to read the Bible, one text that was often accessible as property of a slaveholder on the plantation.

Although the Bible was highly regarded as a text to read, enslaved Black people did not have much of a preference (Douglass & Garrison, 1845; Guterson, 1992; Sherman, 2012; Toppin, 1967). Whatever they could get their hands on was
useful material. Enslaved Black people desired to learn to read and mimic the letters in their own writing. They were mostly concerned with acquiring reading and writing skills that could ultimately lead to their intellectual and physical freedom. Countless slave narratives describe the experiences of enslaved Black people who sought an education despite their social imposition as property or chattel slaves. While some enslaved Black people were taught to read and write by family in the slave quarters, others were taught by their slavemasters who attended formal school in secret or ignorance of its liberatory purposes as further described in chapter 2 (Gutman, 1976). The slave family and slaveholders were indirectly teachers. However, research on the instructional style pertaining to educating enslaved or free Black persons have not been found. Slave narratives do not mention a particular teaching style that was present during this era. As such, features of Afrocentricity are not a consideration in the literature on early Black education during the Antebellum era.

While enslaved and free Black people were denied an education, during this era, a formal schooling system for White people was established. Horace Mann, the Father of the Common School Movement, established Common Schools (modern-day public schools), as all-White schools in the 1830s. This was a racially segregated school system especially in southern states (Sherman, 2012). Common Schools were racially segregated through the “separate but equal” legal doctrine of Plessey v. Ferguson of 1896. The denial of Black literacy and educational efforts was a method to further disempower and disenfranchise the Black community (DuBois, 1935; West, 1972). Despite slavery and death-threats,
enslaved Black people continued to demonstrate their quest for and attainment of their education.

In southern states, the Black church, the origin of the first formal Black educational centers provided a space not only for worship, but education through private elementary schools for free and enslaved Black people (Butchart, 2010; West, 1972; Williams, 2005). These early independent Black schools included Clandestine, Native Schools, Sabbath Schools, Night Schools, Sunday Schools, and First Day Schools (DuBois, 1924, 1968; H. Mitchell, 1977; Jackson, 2016; Lomotey, 2010; Mitchell, 1990; Raboteau, 1995; West, 1972; Williams, 2005). Because they were dissatisfied with being denied an education, Black people created their own schools. They fought against any obstacle that tried to prevent them from obtaining an education. Thus, the agentic Black community continued to establish independent Black schools across many southern states including Kentucky. For example, in April of 1842, the first school for African Americans in Louisville, Kentucky, opened in the basement of First Baptist Church or First Colored Baptist Church (Fifth Street Baptist Church) under the leadership of Reverend Henry Adams. These examples of early Black educational efforts reveal the agency of enslaved Black people during this era (Durden, 2007; Lee, 1992; Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987). As such, literacy remained an integral link to liberation, both mentally and physically. As far as educational efforts during this era, the Black community demonstrated its agency by secretly teaching themselves and each other to read and write.

**Reconstruction Era (1865-1930)**
During this era, Negro Common Schools were established as an authorized separate system of Common Schools for newly emancipated Black persons. Common Schools and Negro Common Schools are the earliest models of racially segregated schools in the U.S. Negro Common Schools were initially built, furnished, and operated with little to no assistance from the White community. However, eventually, White teachers and staff, funded and supported by the US Congress’s Freedmen’s Bureau to “transform” rather than “develop” Black students, controlled these schools (Butchart, 2010, 2016; Durden, 2007; Loder-Jackson, 2015; Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987; Williams, 2005; Woodson, 1933, p. 17).

In Kentucky, between the 1860s and 1890s, the Kentucky General Assembly established Negro Common Schools. Two Negro Common Schools included Howard School and Mitchell & Talbott School, located in Lexington, Kentucky (Smith et al., 2015). At these schools, the majority of teachers were White (Smith et al., 2015). Normal Schools for formal teacher training were racially segregated and closed to Black people who aspired to become teachers. According to Smith et al. (2015), “This was problematic since a Kentucky normal school for black teachers did not exist, and the local white teachers did not want to teach blacks” (p. 162).

The newly emancipated Black community was not satisfied with Negro Common Schools that were disproportionately staffed with White teachers who taught from a racist and Confederate curriculum. Black people sought to change their educational conditions by becoming teachers to start independent Black
schools. Black Normal Schools helped counter this racial injustice and increase a population of educated Black teachers to teach in Black Common Schools (Smith et al., 2015). As a testament to an agentic, self-determined, and independent Black community, Black people attended Black Normal Schools to acquire teacher training that qualified them to teach in Negro Common Schools.

Dissatisfied with Negro Common Schools, predominately under White control, many in the Black community supported all-Black private or independent schools such as Free, Freedom Schools, and privately-owned schools (Butchart, 2010). The Black community including Black church congregants, one of the largest funders in the Black community, collected monetary donations and organized fundraising campaigns to finance and build independent Black schools on private-owned land to maintain control of Black education as independent of and alternatives to Negro Common Schools (Butchart, 2010; DuBois, 1924; Foster, 1997; Grills, 2004; Loder-Jackson, 2015; Lomotey, 2010; Mazama, 2015a, 2015b; Smith et al., 2015; West, 1972; Williams, 2005; Woodson, 1933).

Curriculum and instruction, at these early Black schools, were not largely documented in literature on early Black education. However, the Bible was a text that taught religion at Negro Common Schools. Second-hand Confederate texts used in Common Schools were also present in Negro Common Schools, but with a different aim to challenge racist content.

Other funding sources of independent Black schools came from northern White persons such as missionaries, teachers, leaders, and philanthropists. For example, Julius Rosenwald, a prominent White philanthropist and multi-million-
dollar businessman who was a Sears and Roebuck executive and supporter of Booker T. Washington’s industrial school model, established and funded Rosenwald Schools. These were all-Black schools and educational alternatives to Negro Common Schools across southern states, including Kentucky. Rosenwald Schools and independent Black schools helped to increase educational efforts for Black people. For example, W. E. B. DuBois conducted a report of the Negro Common School in 1901 where he found that two years after Emancipation in 1865, there were fewer than 100,000 Black students in southern schools. However, by 1900, “more than 1.5 million Black students were enrolled in schools” (Sherman, 2012, p. 41). In Kentucky, 158 Rosenwald Schools were constructed in 64 counties, including Lexington and Louisville, from 1917 to 1932, and these “became centers of community pride and academic excellence” (Smith et al., 2015, p. 162).

Rosenwald Schools, only partially funded by Rosenwald, are also an early example of Black agency and self-determination. The Black community was the largest funding source for these schools that operated as an alternative to Negro Common Schools during this era. According to the Statistical Reports on Rural School Construction Program that provided the percentages of Cash Contributions by racial demographics—Black, White, Public Taxation, and Rosenwald Fund from June 10, 1914, to July 1, 1932— the Black community raised and contributed the most funds to Rosenwald Schools as its primary funding source. According to Anderson (1988):

The Julius Rosenwald Fund gave 15.36 percent, rural black people contributed 16.64 percent, whites donated 4.27 percent, and 63.73 percent
was appropriated from public tax funds, collected largely, if not wholly, from black taxpayers. These schools were called Rosenwald Schools because of the contributions from the Rosenwald Fund, and that label led to the popular belief that they were paid for mainly by the fund. In actual practice, the fund never gave even one-half the cost of a schoolhouse, and it generally contributed an average of about one-sixth of the total monetary cost of the building, grounds, and equipment (p. 153-154).

However, after Rosenwald’s death and the historic ruling of the United States Supreme Court *Brown* decision, Rosenwald schools disappeared with a push for racial integration (Ascoli, 2006, Turley-Adams, 1997).

**Jim Crow and Civil Rights Eras (1930-1960)**

This era marked a rise of integrated schools and the fall of Black teachers in these schools. On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court's historic ruling of the *Brown et al., v. Topeka Board of Education* (347 U.S. 483) passed, declaring segregated schools unconstitutional and “racial segregation illegal” (Fowler, 2013, p. 8). While the *Brown* decision and similar cases led to newly integrated schools, the after-effects of the decision also contributed to a shortage of Black teachers, and poorly-funded and ill-equipped schools in predominately Black neighborhoods.

Although teaching was one of the most respected positions that one could obtain in the Black community, Black teachers were either denied the position or offered a lower salary than White teachers (Butchart, 2015; Fairclough, 2004; Foster, 1997; Loder-Jackson, 2015). Black teachers faced frequent job discrimination as the first to be fired and the last to be hired which aimed to silence many Black teachers who became neutral on the issue of racial integration in public and private schools (Foster, 1997; Fowler, 2013; Loder-Jackson, 2015;
However, other Black teachers displayed agency and self-determination in their bravery to outwardly protest racial segregation publicly or secretly teach a pro-Black curriculum amid racial hostility that modeled “civic action, self-respect, and decision-making and survival skills for protection” (Loder-Jackson, 2015, p. 10). Despite the objective to absolve the presence of Black teachers, the agentic Black community remained steadfast in advocating for literacy and established their schools including Freedom Schools. These schools consisted of predominantly Black teachers with high expectations for their students to achieve academically and cultivate a strong cultural identity. Black teachers who taught pro-Black curriculum and instruction were foundational to educating and liberating the Black community especially during the racial turmoil in the U.S.

**The Black Power and Post-Civil Rights Eras (1960-present)**

Black independent schools served as a form of racial protection. Black families continued to racially protect their children by educating them in independent Black schools that have remained consistent in liberating the consciousness of Black students (Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994). Independent Black schools in Kentucky were developed from the efforts of various civil rights leaders including Marian Wright Edelman with the Children’s Defense Fund Freedom Schools, and the Black Panther Party. For example, by the 1970’s, Black Nationalist schools and survival programs such as Black Panther Schools, Free Lunch Programs, Free Schools, Freedom Schools, Intercommunal Youth Institute (IYI), Free Breakfast for School Children Program, Community Learning Center,
and the Black Student Alliance educated Black children in protective ways (Mazama, 2015a, 2015b; Perlstein, 2002). In 1972, the Council of Independent Black Institutes (CIBI) was established as a global and national professional organization of Afrocentric schools including homeschoools (Lomotey, 1992; Madhubuti & Madhubuti, 1994).

During this era, independent Black schools had a particular nationalist and educational agenda that led to the conceptual emergence of Afrocentricity and Afrocentric education. These Black educational efforts provide the first account in literature when Afrocentric education was conceptualized as a strategy for Black teachers concerned with the well-being of their students. These school helped to racially protect Black students from unequal and unjust public and private schools in the U.S. Over time, the development of Black homeschools continued in the legacy of independent Black schools as one educational option for Black families that reflects a Black community is agentic, self-determined, and independent. Eventually, homeschooling served as a symbol of political and sociocultural protest against anti-Black politics and response to unequal public and private schools.

Black homeschools—single families and collectives or cooperatives—are increasing as a method to correct and prevent the miseducation of Black students (Huseman, 2015). Recently, homeschool collectives have sprung up across America as educational spaces where mixed-age groups of students from multiple families learn together to help break the social isolation critics of homeschooling often warn about (Lee, 2012). Whether single family or a collective, Black
homeschools operate differently depending on influences such as family structure, ideology, academic needs, and cultural practices. The goal of Black collectives is to create a “radical space of self-actualization with the potential for positively impacting the family life and educational outcomes of the black community” (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013, p. 266). Afrocentric schools, including Afrocentric public, charter, and homeschools, provide a radical approach to education for Black students.

**Afrocentric Education**

Afrocentric education, a relatively new phenomenon, offers Black students a space to learn about themselves with culture at the forefront of the curriculum. One manifestation of the need to place Black culture at the center of the educational experience derived from Afrocentrism. Afrocentricity, first conceptualized in the 1960s by Molefi Kete Asante, led its way into some of the public and private schools in the U.S. Afrocentric education was one way that Black people tried to educate their children. Afrocentric education, grounded in Black history and culture, is one option for Black people to acquire a better education. Table 1 illustrates the features of Afrocentric schools.

**Table 1**

*The Features of Afrocentric Schools (public, charter, and homeschools)*

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<th>Afrocentric Public and Charter Schools</th>
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<th>Instruction</th>
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<td>Rituals</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
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Afrocentric schools are increasing as an educational option and response to inequitable public schools that have historically disenfranchised students across the U.S. (Mcentire, 2017; Shapiro, 2019). While there are many Afrocentric schools that could be incorporated into this table, for the purpose of this dissertation, it is relevant to show the Afrocentric homeschool collectives examined in the literature consulted. Seven Afrocentric public and charter schools are highlighted in this table including Ember Charter School, Nairobi Day School, New Concept Development Center, Betty Shabazz International Charter Schools, J.S. Chick Elementary School, W. E. B. DuBois Academy, and Carter G. Woodson Academy. The following five Afrocentric homeschool collectives are highlighted in the table: Kamali Academy, Urban Village Academy, BlackStar Afrocentric Homeschool, Black Star Academy Home School Co-op, and Ujima: Children of the Sun Homeschool Collective. This table shows how each feature of Afrocentricity is enacted in Afrocentric schools, whether they are public, private, charter, or homeschools.

**Statement of Problem**

Afrocentric schools, Black schools, were created as a strategic response and an educational option to racist public and private schools. Policies like *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* was reported in 1983 by Ronald Reagan during his State of the Union address. Over 37 years ago, this report was developed to promote educational reform throughout the U.S. (Sherman, 2012).
In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) emerged as the first law to allow students’ legal parent/guardians to have school choice over where their children attended. NCLB promoted high-stakes testing, a narrow curriculum, and casted out low-scoring students in public and private schools (Darling-Hammond, 2005). However, the NCLB failed to accomplish its core objectives in helping to close the racial academic achievement gap. Ironically, exactly 63 years post- *Brown v. Board of Education*, U.S. President Donald Trump announced his first comprehensive plan to eliminate $10.6 billion from federal education programs and initiatives (Brown et al., 2017). Educational problems, developed from segregated schooling, integration, and re-segregation, have played a role in the disenfranchisement of Black students in public and private schools (Loder-Jackson, 2015). According to Woodson (1933):

> Looking over the courses of study of the public schools, one finds little to show that the Negro figures in these curricula. In supplementary matter a good deed of some Negro is occasionally referred to, but oftener the race is mentioned only to be held up to ridicule (p. 63)

Historically, racist and inequitable public and private schools in the US, taught and led by predominately White teachers and administrators, have negatively impacted Black students’ lives (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

**Miseducation and Criminalization**

The *National Center for Education Statistics* (NCES, 2017) reports that White teachers comprise 82% of the teaching force, while Black students are the largest school-age minority population in public and private schools. Public and private schools that espouse a racist curriculum, taught by a predominately White teacher force, are miseducating and culturally disconnected from Black students’
homes, lives, and literacies (Freire, 1973; Hilliard, 1998; King, 1991; Woodson, 1933). This “cultural mismatch” or unequal cultural representation among students and teachers, widens the racial academic achievement gap (Calabrese Barton & Berchini, 2013; Mazama, 2015a, 2015b; Naman, 2009).

Many White teachers enter teacher preparation programs and classrooms with limited to no exposure to interacting with people of culturally diverse backgrounds. However, when they graduate, they are often placed in schools with a high population of culturally diverse students and are ill-prepared to teach in educational environments. These teachers are unresponsive, unqualified, insensitive, offensive, mean, and hypocritical to Black students. These teachers view Black students from a deficit paradigm, blame them for their academic failures, label them as having learning disabilities, and place them in low-achieving classes (Weiner, 2003). Racism in schools is present where White students are often placed in advanced classes, and Black students are often labeled as intellectually abnormal with learning and behavior disabilities. According to Harper (2007), the deficit paradigm, “emphasizes an overly controlling, punitive approach to teaching Black students, which undermines the implementation of cooperative and innovative pedagogical practices” (p. 232). This culture of low expectations minimizes the academic potential and abilities of Black students, placing them at the center of a policing culture that is damaging to the Black student (Richards, 2016; Trunk, 2011).

Black students who require an interactive learning experience in the classroom are often unsupported and misunderstood as inappropriate, disruptive,
oppositional, and defiant. This misunderstanding leads to the disproportionate rates of disciplinarian action against Black students in public and private schools. According to Crotty-Nicholson, et al. (2009), Black students are eight times more likely to be disciplined than their white counterparts. The inequitable treatment of Black students is leading to more suspensions and expulsions (Fenning & Rose, 2007). In 2009, 60% of children detained by juvenile justice systems in the US were minority youth. In 2013, the percentage of detained minority youth increased to 10% (Crotty-Nicholson et al., 2009). Nationally, Black students represent 18% of the population yet account for 48% of all school suspensions and expulsions (Manyando, 2016; Mazama, 2015a, 2015b). By middle and high school, 44% of Black students are referred to the police by school teachers and staff, and elementary and middle school students are handcuffed in the classroom (Manyando, 2016). Black students are 16% of the K-12 grade student population in public schools. However, they are three times more likely to be suspended and account for 31% of school-related arrests in comparison to their White counterparts (Burnley, 2016).

In Louisville, Kentucky, suspension and detention rates and the percentage of Black and White teachers in Jefferson County Public Schools, the largest school district in Kentucky, has reported high suspension rates with Black students, as the most vulnerable population. Due to the rising number of suspensions among Black students, many public schools are attempting to implement new strategies to help reduce suspensions. Initiatives including socio-emotional health services, have been implemented across these schools to further
decrease suspensions and increase instructional learning for students. These efforts have shown improvements. According to the Louisville Courier Journal, elementary school suspensions decreased from 4,396 during the 2017-18 school year to 2,009 during the 2018-2019 school year which is a 54 % decrease (McLaren, 2019). According to McLaren (2019), “Suspensions in the district's middle and high schools are also down, though not by sharp margins, according to JCPS. Middle school suspensions fell 4%, while high school suspensions dropped roughly 3%, data shows” June 18, 2019). Under the leadership of JCPS Superintendent Marty Pollio, the school district in Louisville, Kentucky, is working to decrease student suspension rates.

Many public and private schools in the U.S. place a disproportionate number of Black students in special education or remedial classes, further stunting their intellectual growth in school. Black students are not only unrecognized as contributors to the classroom, but are disproportionality disciplined which justifies their harsher punishment as opposed to the reprimand that White students receive (Burges, 2012; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Huseman, 2015; Raton, 2014; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Black students’ enduring of harsher punishments has led to the increase in high school dropout rates as it is clear that they are not wanted in a school that privileges Whiteness (Love, 2019; Puga, 2019; Shockley et al., 2015).

Black students who are erroneously and disproportionately placed in special education classes in comparison to White students also experience low academic achievement as they are not excelling on grade level. While this is
problematic for all students of color, it is particularly problematic for Black boys, who are often removed from the top of the academic achievement list by a “White default” standard, or marker of achievement (Huseman, 2015; Jonsson & Kenworthy, 2016). The reality is Black students are less likely to be recommended for gifted and talented and advanced placement programs due to the deficit perspective that they are incapable of academic achievement due to many teachers’ low morale and expectations of Black students. Trunk (2011) explained the impact of low teacher morale and low expectations for Black students in public schools:

A culture of low expectations surrounds black students on a daily basis. Whether or not they are made aware of the tremendous achievement gaps between blacks and whites, they tend to recognize that the idealized American vision of being able to achieve whatever they put their minds to does not apply to them. Instead they learn that the academic struggles they may face are merely a symptom of their stupidity and that ANY transgressions are punished harshly in a criminalized classroom. While they are reminded that society has been extremely unkind to the black community, at the same time they are reminded that they must know their place in society, and that demanding equal treatment is disruptive, uncouth and unacceptable.

According to a WFPL article titled (Scott, 2018), the latest data recorded on students in these programs reveals that from 2016-2017, there were approximately 14,000 students in the district’s Gifted and Talented Programs with 60% of that population representing White students who comprise of 45 percent of the district’s total student population. This reveals a major racial disparity within these programs and proves that Black students are less likely recommended and participants in gifted and talented programs, and more so suspended from schools. Intervention is
necessary as it pertains to the creation and administer of standardized assessments, the implementation of racial bias testing of school administrators and teachers in their selection process, and a better measure to test and identify the gifts and talents of all students (Scott, 2018).

While many public and private schools in the U.S. espouse a culture of low teacher expectations and low teacher morale leading to the desire for independent Black schools (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Huseman, 2015), homeschooling has become a viable option to address the academic and cultural needs of Black students.

**Purpose of Study**

This dissertation explores the traditions of Black education that the Black community created in the U.S. from the Antebellum era to the present day. Grounded in the literature on Black education and Black people who have developed better opportunities for their children, this dissertation reveals the agency, self-determination, and independence of Black people in their alternative schooling options. Independent Black schools or Black education have led to the emergence of the Black homeschool, one of many ways to provide a quality and equitable education. Homeschooling is an instance of one of the many ways that African-Americans provide a quality and equitable education for their children. A homeschool collective is an example of Black education situated in the literature on Black education.

Familial relationships manifest in the national and local iterations of Black education as a method of intervention and racial protectionism for students.
throughout history, beginning in the Antebellum period to the present-day U.S. with a localized emphasis on Kentucky. Black people were independent, self-determined, and agentic, in creating their own means of educating themselves in the face of resistance. Black education is a symbolical and literal model of literacy and liberation (Puga, 2019).

**Research Questions**

This dissertation examines familial relationships as a feature of Afrocentricity at BSA across past school years before and during the 2019-2020 school year. However, this dissertation focuses on the current teacher’s philosophical and instructional influence on the education of Black students during the 2019-2020 school year as further discussed in chapter 5. The following research questions guide this dissertation:

1. What salient features are present in the curriculum and instruction at BSA?
2. How were familial relationships beneficial to the Afrocentric vision, mission, and goals of this homeschool collective?
3. How did familial relationships influence the curricular choices and instructional practices at BSA?
4. How does this Afrocentric feature educate to liberate and return students to their traditional greatness?

Familial relationships were enacted by Yala, a teacher at BSA, during classroom learning events. Familial relationships are examined on the basis of the: definition, evidences, and benefits. The employment of familial relationships led to Yala’s implementation of an authoritative instructional approach, a prerequisite to establishing trust and a healthy rapport between the teacher and students. An authoritative instructional approach consisted of kinship connections, positive cultural affirmations, parental roles and responsibilities, and peer-as-sibling
relationships. According to teacher and student interviews and classroom observations, familial relationships, promoting an African time orientation and personalized learning plan in the teaching of OurStory and the practice of Rising Meeting, benefited students’ academic and cultural lives in four ways. BSA students (a) established a joy for school; (b) improved academically and behaviorally; (c) developed self-confidence and self-worth, and (d) felt safe and protected. Familial relationships were beneficial to supporting Black students’ development of cultural pride, agency, self-determination, and independence.

Through familial relationships, this homeschool collective aims to “educate to liberate,” encourage students to achieve their “traditional greatness,” and serve as a method of racial protectionism further explored in chapter five. This dissertation considers the employment of Afrocentricity as best practices in a homeschool collective to inform the education field.

**Chapter Summaries**

Chapter 2 traces an extensive history of Black education and the evolution of independent Black schools including Black homeschools throughout the U.S. Structural obstacles and consequent acts of resistance during each era within the different educational models offer a fuller disposition in this chapter. This chapter discusses Black education as a response to a racist and inequitable schooling system and an example of Black people’s agency, bravery, and resistance.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology of how this research study was conducted. It highlights the philosophy, theoretical framework, procedures,
approaches, methods, and phases of classroom observations and individual interviews of seven research participants connected to this homeschool collective.

Chapter 4 describes the historical context of BSA when it was a Black Panther School. Interviews with three Black teachers — one current and two formers — employed during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years, provide an in-depth description of their influences and contributions to the evolution of BSA from a Black Panther School to an Afrocentric homeschool collective.

Chapter 5 is comprised of an analysis of data from the interviews of one current teacher, student interviews, classroom observations, and textual artifacts. This chapter investigates this homeschool collective during the 2019-2020 school year. It also interrogates how the homeschool teacher developed her curriculum, how she taught the students, and how the students responded to the curriculum and instructional practices during classroom learning events and activities.

Chapter 6, a summary and conclusion to this dissertation, highlights the results and findings of this dissertation emphasizing Afrocentric education, particularly familial relationships at BSA, as best practices for teachers in any educational setting, whether public, private, parochial, charter, or homeschool.

**Conclusion**

This dissertation focuses on Black people creating educational opportunities for themselves in response to culturally limiting and exclusive schools. The establishment of Black homeschools is one of many examples of the Black community’s desire for a liberating education and their agency, self-determination, and independence. The next chapter consists of a comprehensive
literature review on Black education in the U.S. from a national and localized perspective.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

*It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.*
—Frederick Douglass

This chapter traces the national and localized history of independent Black schools or Black education in the United States with a focus on Kentucky. The literature of Black education provides a historical context of how Black people have educated their children despite racism from the Antebellum era to the post-Civil Rights era (1600 to present-day). Despite anti-literacy laws, racial segregation, desegregated schools, and educational inequities, Black people have consistently desired literacy and created their schooling options to educate their children. Independent Black schools, a response to historical and systemic racism, are an act of agency, self-determination, liberation, and racial protectionism (Kifano, 1996; Lee, 1992; Mazama, 2015a, 2015b; Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987; Shuja, 1994). Seven key points explored in this chapter reveal an agentic and self-determined Black community throughout history and in a contemporary context:

- the quest for literacy by formerly enslaved Black persons despite racist laws including the Slave Codes in some southern states;
- the initiation of self-funded Black schools;
- the role and financial assistance of the Black church in the establishment of early independent and clandestine Black schools;
- the role of the Freedmen’s Bureau in providing financial and educational resources to Common Schools including Negro Common Schools;
- the development of Rosenwald Schools, an alternative to Negro Common Schools that was financed by a White philanthropist;
the development of freedom schools and Black Panther Schools during the Black Power and Civil Rights eras as a response to inequitable and integrated schools; and

• the emergence of Black homeschools as a contemporary method to educate and racially protect Black children.

The historical, intellectual, and cultural contexts in which the Black community established independent Black schools in the United States are discussed in this chapter. ERIC, EBSCO, JSTOR, ProQuest, and Google Scholar, were used to conduct a broad search of scholarly articles, popular local and national news reports, and books on Black homeschools. I researched specific keywords and concepts, including Afrocentric education, African centered education, reprogramming, Black education, independent Black schools, and Black homeschools. Journals such as *Education and Urban Society* (1988), *Peabody Journal of Education* (2000), and *Evaluation and Research in Education* (2003) regularly publish scholarship on homeschoolers, but less on Black homeschoolers. Most academic journals confine articles on homeschooling to special issues (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013).

**Definition of Terms and Concepts**

The following definitions are provided to help the reader understand the context of the key terms and concepts throughout this dissertation.

**A Black Racial Identity**

Nomenclature is the process of naming and identifying a person or people. For many Black people, naming and defining oneself begins with identifying as African. Renaming oneself is connected to the concept of Afrocentricity, a modern manifestation of the naming practice that has evolved over time across
various eras for Black people. The search for a comprehensive racial identity is one that imbues the individual with a sense of belongingness and pride for identity renewal (Harper, 2007). Today, Black or African American are culturally appropriate and politically acceptable terms. This racial category is used to describe people of African heritage and descent throughout the Diaspora. According to Mickey (2008), African-American refers to the approximately 33 million people who are 13% of the U.S. population.

**Homeschooling**

In its simplest form, homeschooling is education in a home environment. *Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary* defines homeschooling as “to teach school subjects to one’s children at home.” There are a variety of homeschooling definitions by scholars (Holt, 1986; Reich, 2002). However, the definition of homeschooling used in this study is derived from Dr. Brian D. Ray, a prominent academic on homeschool education and President of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) who has conducted the most research on homeschoolers in the United States. According to Ray (2011) homeschooling is a family-learning environment where children are taught in or near their home with the family as the principal educator.

Although homeschooling as a concept did not emerge until late in the 20th century, that is not to say that it did not exist. It has been around for centuries to meet the needs of families who desired to educate themselves and their children. Homeschools, family-led private schools, are used interchangeably as variations
of the same concept in the discussion of independent Black schools, particularly, the ones that are homebased.

A homeschool collective offers what a single homeschool family does not—a learning environment with multiple people from various families. One type of homeschool reflects a single family that includes the children as students and the parents/guardians as teachers. Another type is a homeschool collective or cooperative (co-op) that consists of multiple families in a group-based setting who are taught in the same space by one or more teachers who are parents/guardians or paid or voluntary teachers. A homeschool collective may provide the socialization that a single-family homeschool may be concerned with not addressing. Socialization includes field trips, group-based lessons, and extra-curricular activities.

The Evolution of Black Education in the United States

This section explores the historical evolution of Black education in the United States with a particular emphasis on Kentucky within four eras: Antebellum (1619-1865), characterized by the institution of slavery and secret educational efforts; Reconstruction (1865-1930), consisting of the government and philanthropic-funded segregated schools; Jim Crow and Civil Rights (1930-1960), during which racial inequality led to integration laws and the development of new educational alternatives in the Black community; Black Power and Post-Civil Rights (1960-present) when pro-Black schools including Afrocentric schools emerged that gave rise to the Black homeschool movement. During each historical era, Black people responded to racism in various ways by consistently
seeking and creating their educational options. Specific strategies of how enslaved Black people attempted to acquire their freedom are provided throughout each historical period to show how these strategies changed to reflect their living conditions as Black people created avenues for themselves to be literate.

Historically, Black families have protected their children from racism by focusing on their education as manifested in their agency, self-determination, liberation, and racial protectionism. These elements, found throughout the literature on Black education, are most relevant to this study as Black people have acquired their literacy for liberation in three strategic ways, including individually, in the family unit, and at an organized school.

**The Antebellum Era (1619-1865)**

The enslaved African family maintained their cultural traditions, including a strong familial culture that extended beyond biological ties to interrelated families. Enslaved Black persons on the plantation, in particular, maintained their familial culture and educational methods that preserved their African heritage and identity (Gutman, 1976; Pipes, 1988). Familial and kinship ties, including parents, grandparents, and distant relatives, biological and extended across plantations, are responsible for the educational and cultural development of the Black child. African cultural traditions shared in the Black family on the slave plantation was an act of agency and freedom for literacy, as well as a method of racial protectionism. The need to pass on cultural traditions through lessons is one of the earliest forms of education found in the enslaved African family and today’s African-American family.
**Individual Literacy Folktales**

One of the many ways that the enslaved African family remained resilient was through their method of education. With a strong desire to obtain literacy and freedom, enslaved Black person secretly practiced the African cultural ways of teaching through the sharing or transmission of folklore and folktales (Harris, 1990). The slave community used storytelling, oral narratives, songs, poems, proverbs, written letters, and sermons to teach moral lessons, cultural values, familial connection, self-determination, racial etiquette, and how to survive in a racist world (Anderson, 1988; Williams, 2005). Folktales were especially important during an era when reading and writing were illegal in southern states, both in law and custom.

While there were several plantation insurrections, the Cato, Stono Rebellion, or Stono Slave Revolt, was the largest. This revolt prompted the passing of the Slave Code of 1740, anti-literacy laws, also known as Black or Slave Codes. These Codes legally prohibited Black people from gathering, free or enslaved, and acquiring an education, including learning to read and write (Aubespin et al., 2011; DuBois, 1924; West, 1972; Williams, 2005). Literacy was ultimately deemed dangerous to the institution of slavery (Genovese, 1976). Lomotey (2010) explained:

> It was feared that a literate enslaved African or an enslaved African with two much autonomy would be dangerous and discontent; therefore, laws were created to discourage teaching enslaved men and women even the alphabet or allowing them to attend church or marry. (p. 557)

Enslaved Black people who attempted to obtain literacy, were faced with “heavy punishment” (Horace Mann Bond, 1950, p. 103). As a result, it is no
shock that before 1865, 90% of enslaved Black people in the south identified as illiterate or unable to read or write (Butchart, 2010; Mazama, 2013). Some enslaved Black persons secretly learned to read and write in English using the Bible and grammar books (Anderson, 1988). Sambol-Tosco (2004) explained that White racists were:

Concerned that literate slaves would forge passes or convince other slaves to revolt, Southern slaveholders generally opposed slave literacy. In 1740 South Carolina enacted... one of the earliest laws prohibiting teaching a slave to read or write. In other parts of the South the mid-eighteenth century saw an expansion of earlier laws forbidding the education of slaves. (p. 2)

Despite anti-literacy legislation, folktales compensated for the laws against teaching enslaved or freed Black people to read and write. These animal and human tales, containing hidden messages, taught children to embrace self-worth, independence, a strong work ethic, and racial and cultural pride (Nichols, 1989).

**The Enslaved Black Family and Literacy**

Autobiographies provide evidence of the educational efforts of enslaved and freed Black people during the antebellum era. Anecdotal documentation from primary sources, including slave narratives, letters, memoirs, diaries, journals, and autobiographies, provide evidence of early Black literacy and resistance.

Secondary sources published in the Federal Writers Project consist of a collection of interviews with former enslaved and free Black persons. These interviews describe the Black community’s quest for literacy as they secretly taught reading and writing to family members on the plantation in the slave quarters (Anderson, 1988; Anderson & Moss, 1999; Butchart, 2010; Durden, 2007; Lee, 1992; Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987; Williams, 2005). Many were not concerned with the
content or curriculum of the readings, but only that they learned the basic elements of reading and writing.

A 1954 PBS interview with a former slave, Bob Ledbetter confessed that he was able to write a letter in clear penmanship. Although he never attended a formal school, his father taught him to read and write including basic reading and writing skills through spelling lessons in their living quarters (Sherman, 2012).

While some enslaved Black people acquired an education in their homes, other’s subverted slavery and its anti-literacy laws when they played school with their slavemasters’ children and learned from their enslavers who attended formal school. Notable Black intellectuals and leaders such as Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington—former enslaved Black persons—sought liberation and literacy despite their enslavement (Guterson, 1992). Frederick Douglass was taught the alphabet by his slavemaster’s wife, Sophia, when he was 12 years old. However, Douglass continued to acquire literacy by tricking and bribing poor White children to exchange reading and writing lessons for bread or “pilfered food” (Douglass & Garrison, p. 38). He also stole primers from these children that he used to teach himself to read and write (Douglass & Garrison, 1845).

Aside from learning to read and write by family members in the home environment and outwitting enslavers to teach, enslaved Black people also learned to read and write by attending school. Booker T. Washington, a slave in the salt mines and farm laborer, attended “school whenever he could” (Ashton, 2007, p. 3). Later, his desire for an education led him to establish his school, Tuskegee Institute (Tuskegee University), to educate masses of Black people.
**Organized Independent Black Schools**

The first organized phase of Black education emerged with Clandestine schools in southern cities (Anderson & Moss, 1999). These early Black schools focused on enslaved Black people teaching lessons from the original Bible for religious instruction. However, a modified version of the Holy Bible, consisting of teaching only select parts of the Bible and using religious doctrine, developed and consulted by White enslavers, colonizers, and proslavery pastors encouraged the institution of slavery as normative to dissuade enslaved Black people from learning to read and write as a method to maintain control and prevent insurrection on slave plantations (Lumpkin, 2019). Since Black people were legally denied an education whether enslaved or free, they used Clandestine schools, mostly located in the Black church, as an opportunity to learn the truth and improve their lives. The Black church, home to the Black preacher and Black sermon tradition, has always been an independent Black institution organized by and for Black people. As the origin of the first formal independent Black school for enslaved and free Blacks, it is one of the largest institutional supporters of Black education (Irvine, 1989; Lomotey, 2010; Williams, 2005). According to Jackson (2016), the Black Church was and still is the ‘cultural womb of the black community.’ Not only did it give birth to new institutions, including banks, insurance companies, and schools, it also provided an arena for political activities, an educational academy, and outlets for artistic, musical, and theatrical development for the youth in the community.
The Black church doubled as a religious and educational space for Black people, representing the Black community’s self-determination, agency, and independence to acquire liberation through literacy. The Black preacher, a leader in the Black community, had the power, influence, and intellectual resources to raise the consciousness of the Black community (Mitchell, 1977). Preaching and teaching were the few occupations that college-educated Black people could acquire. These positions were influential and the two most highly respected positions in the Black community especially to the educational efforts of the Black community (Foster, 1989, 1997). Black teachers were integral to both the integrationist and separatist movements of its time. Historically, teaching was one of the most respected positions that one could obtain in the Black community next to preaching. According to Foster (1997):

This is true even though during the three decades following emancipation and the first six decades of the twentieth century teaching, along with the ministry, was one of the few occupations open to college-educated blacks. ‘The only thing an educated Negro can do is teach or preach,’ people would say. (p. xvii)

As a prestigious career throughout history, Black teachers instilled cultural pride and moral values in Black students despite having second-hand textbooks, teaching a Eurocentric and racist curriculum, and working in inadequate school buildings (Fairclough, 2004). According to Fairclough:

As described in teachers’ memoirs and oral history interviews, black schools were places where order prevailed, where teachers commanded respect, and where parents supported the teachers. Teachers, pupils, and
parents formed an organic community that treated schooling as a collective responsibility. (p. 44)

Furthermore, the Black sermon tradition, laced with an African linguistic and rhetorical style of storytelling, is a performative delivery of messages from the Black experience, has served as an integral site, intersecting Christian values and racial oppression (Foster, 1989; Mitchell, 1977, 1990; Rosenberg, 1970a, 1970b).

At the turn of the 19th century, leading into the Reconstruction era, Native Schools, Sabbath Schools, Night Schools, Sunday Schools, First Day Schools, and privately-owned schools emerged as independent Black schools. Sabbath Schools taught religious lessons, reading, writing, and arithmetic. Native Schools were maintained by newly emancipated Black people. These schools serve as a model and manifestations of the Black community’s agency, self-determination, control, and independence (Anderson, 1988; Anderson & Moss, 1999; Butchart, 2010; Durden, 2007; Lee, 1992; Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987; Williams, 2005). These independent Black schools offered literacy to the enslaved and free Black community in Black living quarters and churches (Anderson, 1988; Butchart, 2010).

Black schools, located in churches, provided private elementary schools for free and enslaved Black people. Enslaved Black persons were admitted only with written permission from their slaveowners (Aubespın et al., 2011). These early Black schools, organized by Black teachers, were open in the evenings and on weekends to accommodate students’ work schedules (Butchart, 1980). For example, in April of 1842, the first formal school for African-Americans, led by
Reverend Henry Adams, opened in Louisville, Kentucky, in the basement of First Baptist Church (Fifth Street Baptist Church). Other Black schools located in churches included Green Street Baptist, Jackson Street Methodist, Centre Street Methodist, and Quinn Chapel. Black students at these schools, included Horace Morris and William Steward, both would later make significant contributions to independent Black education in Kentucky (Aubespin et al., 2011).

Like Douglass and Woodson, Black people have always believed that it was their responsibility to acquire literacy, despite their unjust social imposition and oppressions faced. Whether free or in bondage, mental literacy has always been directly connected to physical liberation as it provided enslaved Black persons the ability to control their lives even during slavery. According to Williams (2005), “Reading indicated to the world that this so-called property had a mind, and writing foretold the ability to construct an alternative narrative about bondage itself. Literacy among enslaved Black persons would expose slavery, and masters knew it” (p. 7).

Black people desired literacy to subvert slavery to acquire their liberation both physically and intellectually. The denial of Black literacy and educational efforts sought to disempower and disenfranchise the Black community (West, 1972). Anti-literacy laws did the exact opposite of what it intended. It fueled the Black community’s quest for literacy and liberation with the establishment of independent Black schools. Enslaved Black people who managed to acquire literacy, associated with liberation during the antebellum period, included three particular strategies during which they (a) persuaded White children and enslavers
to teach them to read and write through trickery and bribery; (b) secretly learned to read and write from family members in their living quarters through informal lessons such as storytelling and folktales; and (c) organized their own schools.

Although well-intentioned, early Black education was not without threat of White violence that manifested primarily through physical violence, arson, and incendiary terrorism. White violence through whipping, torturing, and killing Black teachers and students was a deliberate tactic to destroy Black literacy and education (Anderson, 1988; Turley-Adams, 1997). However, Black people had an unyielding pursuit of freedom as education had the power to improve their intellectual, physical, and material circumstances. Literacy was tangible to acquiring wealth, power, and resources, three privileges that were denied to Black people legally deemed as property of White people. Black people’s quest for an education is a testament to their agency and self-determination that was based on their need for liberation and racial protection well into the Reconstruction era as explored in the next section.

**Reconstruction Era (1865-1930)**

During this era, the first racially segregated school in Massachusetts was designed only for White Protestants. Eventually, Common Schools, all-White schools, spread across northern and southern colonies without any admittance for Black persons, until Negro Common Schools (or Black Common Schools) were established after the Civil War (Sherman, 2012).

The signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by the U.S. President Abraham Lincoln to abolish slavery in 1863 was ratified in 1865. However, the institution of
slavery remained unresolved at the national level. As a result, it is imperative to review the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments that granted newly freed Black persons liberties that they didn’t previously have. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in 1865 within the United States. The Fourteenth Amendment granted Black people citizens. Prior to this Amendment, Black people were viewed as three-fifths of a person under the law of American slavery. With this Amendment, Black people were legally identified as citizens, although, it would be 100 years later when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed to fully grant Black people their rights and liberties of American citizens. The Fifteenth Amendment granted Black people the right to vote. However, again, it would be more than 100 years before the Voting Rights Act of 1965 reinforced this legislation for Black people.

Despite the passing of anti-slavery legislation, newly freed Black people continued to struggle under inherently racist policies that sought to maintain the status quo of White privilege and Black oppression. However, Black people continued to desire liberation and literacy as their two main objectives to better living conditions. Former enslaved Black persons were the first among native Southerners to depart from the planters’ ideology of education and society and to campaign for universal, state supported public education (Anderson, 1988). Common Schools and Negro Common Schools were lawfully under the “separate but equal” doctrine as racially segregated schools. However, these schools were far from equal (Butchart, 2016). Private White funding sources and sponsors included Republican politicians, the AMA, the National Freedmen’s Relief Association, and the Union Army for Common Schools. Negro Common Schools (or Black Common Schools) were funded by the Black community’s tax dollars through fundraising, with
some financial support from the American Missionary Association (AMA), the United
States Congress’ Freedmen’s Bureau, Works Progress Administration, and individual
White people and their organizations (Butchart, 2016; DuBois, 1924). According to
Turley-Adams (1997), “During Reconstruction, a combination of northern carpetbaggers
and emancipated southern blacks forced state governments in the South to provide funds
for Negro education” (p. 7).

In comparison to Common Schools, Negro Common Schools that existed in the
South from the 1860s to the 1890s, were racially unequal in funding, facilities, and
curriculum. Negro Common Schools were made possible through financial assistance
from the Freedmen’s Bureau that was comprised of the Bureau of Refugees and
Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (Butchart, 2010; Loder-Jackson, 2015; Williams, 2005).
Negro Common Schools, located in Black churches, small schoolhouses, lodge halls, and
small rented homes, were not always in the best condition. These were old dilapidated
and abandoned buildings previously used by White people in Common Schools who left
these buildings for newer school buildings (Aubespin et al., 2011; Turley-Adams, 1997;
West, 1972).

Common Schools and Negro Common Schools, taught by young White, northern
women, were supported by the AMA of the Congregational Church. These teachers had a
savior mentality and exerted control and paternalism (Butchart, 2010). Many Black
teachers were subversive to the Bureau’s distribution of free Confederate or anti-Black
curricular materials and racist textbooks to racially segregated Common Schools, Negro
Common Schools, and independent Black schools. This Confederate curriculum
attempted to portray Black people negatively and perpetuate stereotypes leading to Black
inferiority and subordination (Asante, 2003; Butchart, 2010; Williams, 2005; Woodson, 1933).

While it was difficult to abandon this curriculum entirely due to the amount of supervision and White control that the Bureau and other funding sources had in Negro Common Schools, many Black teachers secretly combined Confederate texts with lessons on Black history and culture through pro-Black texts as an act of resistance. By the 1890s, African-American literature was published and distributed by Black scholars and leaders such as Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, and Sterling Brown (Harris, 1990). The African Civilization Society helped to provide culturally conscious literature with the establishment of the Freedmen’s Torchlight. DuBois’ Dill Publishing Company and the Associated Publishers, two Black-owned publishing companies, sought to authenticate and emancipate the voices of African-Americans, and to disrupt the racist and oppressive narratives that negatively depicted Black people published in and distributed by traditionally White publishing companies (Harris, 1990).

Black teachers taught reading and writing from books written for and by Black people. They also incorporated the school models of key Black intellectual leaders and educators such as Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois. Some Black teachers in Negro Common Schools taught from the Jeanes curriculum that promoted Washington’s industrial school model with an emphasis on trades but was monitored by White teachers. Lessons on gardening and agriculture were central lessons in the curriculum. However, when Black teachers weren’t under surveillance, they tended to offer more of a basic curriculum found in Common Schools that was viewed as a more challenging curriculum with lessons more aligned with the literary school model (Anderson, 1988; Anderson &

In 1867, two Negro Common Schools were Howard School and Mitchell & Talbott School in Lexington, Kentucky (Smith et al., 2015). According to Aubespin et al. (2011), by 1870, there were 1,500 students attending fifteen Black schools in Louisville, Kentucky. That same year, the Louisville Board of Education created a “Committee on Colored Schools” and later a “Board of Visitors” to evaluate:

Black schools and monitor the ‘moral character’ of black teachers and/or applicants for teaching positions. The African Americans appointed to these bodies, usually the ‘safer’ and more ‘responsible’ members of the Black community, reported to the Board of Education in July of each year (Aubespin et al., 2011, p. 83).

In October 1870, the Louisville Board of Education used public school funds to establish church-sponsored public elementary schools. Fifth Street Baptist and Centre Street Methodist in Louisville, Kentucky were two of those schools (Aubespin et al., 2011, p. 82). Four years later, in 1874, the Kentucky General Assembly authorized a separate system of Common Schools for the Black community under Rev. Daniel Stevenson’s tenure as Superintendent of Public Instruction in Kentucky (Aubespin et al., 2011; Turley-Adams, 1997). In 1891, the Kentucky Constitution legalized this segregated school system.

White southern and northern ministers and missionaries, educators, and northern philanthropists financially supported and managed Common Schools and Negro Common Schools in the South (Turley-Adams, 1997). Funding sources from nonprofit private foundations for Black education included Phelps-Stokes Fund, the Peabody Fund,
and the John F. Slater Fund. The Peabody Fund donated $2 million to help establish Negro Common Schools in many southern cities and towns. This Fund led to the emergence of the John F. Slater Fund that provided $1 million toward Black education. The Slater Fund also supported Normal and denominational or private religious schools that specialized in vocational training and recruiting Black teachers (Turley-Adams, 1997). In addition, the Anna T. Jeanes Fund, established in 1908 for rural schools, provided teacher training opportunities for traveling teachers and supervisors to Negro Common Schools. The Jeanes curriculum also reflected Washington’s industrial school model (Turley-Adams, 1997).

During Reconstruction, Black people took extraordinary measures to acquire their education. Black teachers subverted the social order through the schools that they established and the curriculum that they taught. Black teachers supplemented and replaced racist texts with authentic Black narratives through Black-owned publishing companies and organizations. Black teachers have always provided academically challenging and culturally-affirming curriculum despite racist curricular restrictions to educate and protect Black students. Black teachers’ subversion against the Confederate curriculum is an act of Black agency, self-determination, resistance, and bravery. This subversive tactic reveals that even when Black people looked like they were accommodating, they were maneuvering from the status quo of racist schools in the United States.

**Independent Black Schools**

At the turn of the 19th century, Black people continued to start their own schools. They recognized the need for Black teachers and a curriculum that
focused on their culture and interest. They didn’t want the White missionaries to teach them from a racist and Confederate curriculum in paternalistic schools. Instead, independent Black schools were comprised of classical and/or vocational trade opportunities, even in Black Normal Schools— the earliest versions of all-Black colleges, known today as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Early Black schools were established and primarily financed by the Black community through grassroots efforts which is an example of their agency and self-determination. For example, Black church congregants collected monetary donations and organized fundraising campaigns to establish independent Black schools on private-owned land. Homemade dinners such as chicken, fried fish, watermelon, and cakes were sold to build and furnish one-story and two-story brick churches and schoolhouses that provided proper shelter and were furnished with books, chalkboards, clothes for students, materials, and paid for teacher salaries (West, 1972; Williams, 2017; Woodson, 1933). These communal efforts reflected familial relationships between the church, families, communities, and schools (Williams, 2005; Williams, 2017). According to Lomotey (2010), independent Black schools were, “truly a testament to the self-determination and value African Americans-free or freed-placed on literacy” (p. 558). Furthermore, the Julius Rosenwald Fund (Sears and Roebuck) was another funding source that established Rosenwald Schools, all-Black schools, an alternative to Negro Common Schools with an industrial school model and Black history lessons that were funded by a prominent White philanthropist and the Black community.
Rosenwald Schools

Julius Rosenwald, a multi-million-dollar businessman who was a Sears & Roebuck and Company active manager in 1897, and later, the president in 1909, established Rosenwald Schools. Funded by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation, these Schools emerged to support Black educational efforts (Ascoli, 2006). Rosenwald’s financial contribution was significant to the expansion of Black education in the US, particularly in the South, as an alternative to the racist Common Schools that sought to culturally deprive Black students. Rosenwald Schools, that operated in separation to Negro Common Schools, offered a quality education for Black people based on Washington’s industrial school model and philosophy aside from Common Schools (Anderson, 1988; Loder-Jackson, 2015; Turley-Adams, 1997; Woodson, 1933).

Rosenwald established 300 Black schools across the South in Alabama, Tennessee, and Georgia. From 1917 to 1932, in Kentucky, 158 Rosenwald Schools were located in 64 counties in rural and urban communities (Turley-Adams, 1997; Smith et al., 2015). Between 1917 and 1920, thirty-three schools were built in various Kentucky counties (Turley-Adams, 1997). According to Turley-Adams (1997), the Rosenwald Funds eventually extended their financial support to construct Black schools, focus on:

- teacher training, black leadership development, fellowships for promising black and white students, research on African American health and medical services, subsidies for county and school libraries, appropriations for specific social studies, and contributions to agencies and individuals working in the field of race relations (p. 22).
While Negro Common Schools were staffed with predominately White teachers, Rosenwald Schools were comprised of trained Black teachers educated in training schools to become Rosenwald teachers. At the time, racial discrimination legally prohibited Black teachers from attending Normal schools or teacher training schools, leaving them less prepared than White teachers. According to Smith et al. (2015), “A Kentucky normal for black teachers did not exist, and the local white teachers did not want to teach blacks” (p. 162). Although informally trained, Black teachers taught Black children everything they knew to prepare them intellectually and culturally with a focus on their moral and educational development (DuBois, 1924; Loder-Jackson, 2015; Woodson, 1933). However, in 1886, the Kentucky State Normal School for Colored Persons (now Kentucky State University) was established in Frankfort, Kentucky to provide teacher education for aspiring Black teachers (Smith et al., 2015).

Rosenwald Schools were financially supported by the General Education Board, the Jeanes and Slater Funds, and Tuskegee Institute, all of whom covered teacher salaries, building facilities, and housing for teachers. However, the Black community is noted as having raised the most funds for Black education which reveals their self-determination and agency to fund their own educational efforts without the complete reliance of White philanthropists’ determination (Anderson, 1988; Ascoli, 2006).

As briefly described in chapter 1, the Black community was responsible for raising the remaining balance as the largest funding source for these schools that operated as an alternative to Negro Common Schools during this era. According to the Statistical Reports on Rural School Construction Program that provided the percentages of Cash Contributions by racial demographics—Black, White, Public Taxation, and Rosenwald
Fund from June 10, 1914 to July 1, 1932— the Black community contributed the most funds to Rosenwald Schools. According to Anderson (1988):

The Julius Rosenwald Fund gave 15.36 percent, rural black people contributed 16.64 percent, whites donated 4.27 percent, and 63.73 percent was appropriated from public tax funds, collected largely, if not wholly, from black taxpayers. These schools were called Rosenwald Schools because of the contributions from the Rosenwald Fund, and that label led to the popular belief that they were paid for mainly by the fund. In actual practice, the fund never gave even one-half the cost of a schoolhouse, and it generally contributed an average of about one-sixth of the total monetary cost of the building, grounds, and equipment” (p. 153-154).

Even with Rosenwald as a funding source for Rosenwald Schools, the Black community raised and contributed more funds to Rosenwald Schools as the primary funding source. Both the Black community and Rosenwald desired for Black education to be supported entirely by public dollars rather than private funding which speaks to his desire to keep Black education in the control of the Black community.

Massive acts of violence by White racists through the beating of teachers and vandalizing, burning, and bombing of Black sites of liberation and literacy including churches and schools also reigned supreme (Butchart, 2010; Loder-Jackson, 2015; West, 1972). For example, many White teachers and superintendents disciplined Black teachers and students through flogging or whipping (Aubespin et al., 2011; Butchart, 2010, 2016; Sherman, 2012; West, 1972; Williams, 2005). Arson was also a major issue during this time. According to Butchart (2010), “Incendiary terrorism against education thereby became economic terrorism as well, depriving the black communities of places of learning (and, frequently, places of worship) and divesting them of scarce communal
capital” (p. 166). White violence sought to threaten Black teachers and students in their quest for an education and control independent Black schools. Butchart (2010) asserted, “The carefully policed educational boundary between whites and blacks bespoke a deep fear among members of the dominant race of the potential power of literacy” (p. 15). Despite White violence and resistance to Black literacy, the Black community continued to persevere. New ideas for the construction of these building were required as a method of protection against racism (Smith et al., 2015). Black schools that were once wood frame buildings and became brick buildings reveal the Black community’s agency and self-determination for the obtainment of freedom and literacy, to provide “a path to autonomy and equality” (Butchart, 2010, p. 166).

Rosenwald Schools are a successful example of how independent Black schools were funded and established in southern Black communities for the education of Black people, Black teachers, and an industrial school model that reflected Washington’s philosophy. More than 5,000 Rosenwald schools were built and operated across the country, particularly in the rural South (Ascoli, 2006). The Kentucky Negro Educational Association (KNEA) supported the construction of Rosenwald Schools (Turley-Adams, 1997). By 1932, at the time of Rosenwald’s death, he had constructed 5,357 public schools, shops and teachers’ homes in 883 counties across 15 southern states. Rosenwald Schools “represent the most sustained effort to improve the quality of public education for black Americans prior to the changes wrought by Brown v. Board of Education” (Turley-Adams, 1997, p. 1).

Jim Crow and Civil Rights Eras (1930-1960)
In 1947, the racially segregated Jefferson County school system was established in Louisville, Kentucky. By 1948, there was only one Rosenwald School with 28 students and one teacher (Aubespin et al., 2011). Black families were beginning to seek new ways to educate their children during this era, marked by racial segregation in public places including schools, that led to a focus on parents’ control of their children’s education. In 1950, the People v. Levisen case (404 Ill. 574, 90 N. E. 2d 213) in Chicago, Illinois, emphasized the right of parents to control their children’s education which further legitimized homeschooling in the United States as schools remained racially segregated (Sherman, 2012).

Amid racial hostility, public protests were risky and jeopardized teachers’ jobs and economic security at the political level during an era when Black teachers were not protected by the Union. To decrease protests, White school officials discouraged Black teachers and students from participating. Teacher contracts were developed to pay teachers when students attended schools to persuade them not to support student absenteeism for protests (Loder-Jackson, 2015). As a result, some Black teachers subtly resisted racism in schools to keep their jobs (Loder-Jackson, 2015; Williams, 2005). As a result, some Black teachers remained neutral on the issue of racial integration.

Some Black teachers outwardly protested racial segregation by participating in marches, boycotts, sit-ins, and jail-ins. Many Black teacher were members of prominent Black organizations such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Many Black teachers actively participated in political demonstrations to promote equal education for students and to equalize teacher salaries (Foster, 1997; Loder-Jackson, 2017; Williams, 2005). Other Black teachers indirectly engaged in political protest by encouraging their students to participate by walking out of the classroom and marching in the streets. One example is *The Children’s Crusade of 1963* (Loder-Jackson, 2015).

Other Black teachers secretly taught a pro-Black curriculum that provided a democratic education. This curriculum modeled “civic action, self-respect, and decision-making and survival skills for protection” and countered the Confederate and anti-racist curriculum (Loder-Jackson, 2015, p. 10). Loder-Jackson (2015) explains, “Many educators have used the classroom to teach powerful lessons about freedom, justice, and democracy, which have stirred younger generations of students to action” (p. 8). Thus, the role of the Black teacher on curriculum and instruction in the schooling environment is crucial to bringing about positive educational reform in public and private schools.

Due to the tireless advocacy for racial integration, on May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court's historic ruling of the *Brown et al., v. Topeka Board of Education* (347 U.S. 483) passed, declaring segregated schools unconstitutional and “racial segregation illegal” (Fowler, 2013, p. 8). This ruling overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case of 1896 that required railways to segregate cars by race and extended to other public facilities including schools, with the ineffective “separate but equal” doctrine (Sherman, 2012). In July 1955, the school system in Monticello, Kentucky (Wayne County), was the first to
desegregate, followed by Lexington (Fayette County) in September of the same year (Aubespin et al., 2011).

Busing emerged from school desegregation after the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the South. This Act permitted the withholding of federal funds from schools that engaged in established sanctioned segregation (Pruitt, 2018). The *Brown* decision led to the disappearance of Rosenwald schools that were no longer needed with newly integrated schools. All-Black public schools closed and were forced to merge with all-White schools. Neighborhood schools that were once family-oriented and controlled by the Black community became a figment of the past as Black students were bused into predominately White neighborhoods to attend integrated schools. On April 1, 1975, in Louisville, Kentucky, Jefferson County schools held court-ordered busing policies for racial integration (Ascoli, 2006; Smith et al., 2015; Williams, 2005).

White teachers have historically had lower expectations for Black students in comparison to White students (Cunningham, 2016). While integrated schools were an attempt to move in the right direction, it was not beneficial to Black students. The *Brown* decision led to two contrasting perspectives among the Black community. Some people advocated for integrated schools that promised to provide an equitable education, while others advocated against integration as ineffective in keeping its promise. Due to the unfulfillment of integration, 45% of Black students who enrolled in all-white schools between 1956 to 1957, attempted to return to their former Black schools (Aubespin et al., 2011).
While many in the Black community fought for integrated schools in the early 1960s and 1970s, others realized that integrating into White schools was threatening. Black families sought alternatives to integrated schools that failed in its promise to provide an equitable educational experience for all students. As such, the Black community, agentic and self-determined, established their own institutions including independent Black schools for their children that were staffed by Black teachers. Independent Black schools were established and comprised of Black teachers with high expectations who encouraged their students to achieve academically and cultivate a strong cultural identity.

During this era, violent resistance by White racists including the Ku Klux Klan increased which led to a change in the aesthetic of the typical school structure (Aubespin et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2015). Prior to the Brown decision, schools were wood-frame buildings until they were threatened by White violence during which they changed their structure to bricks for protection (Butchart, 2010). Arson was a weapon that emerged with the physical manifestations of early Black intellectual aspirations of education. Black churches, schools, and homes were torched and bombed by White supremacists and racists. Despite nonviolent and peaceful protests, Black and White protestors were attacked by racists and White vigilantes. Police officers used tear-gas, dogs, and other methods of terror against peaceful demonstrators.

Notwithstanding White violence and resistance to Black literacy, the Black community continued to position education as a part of the emancipation struggle that could provide “a path to autonomy and equality” (Butchart, 2010, p.
166). As a result, many southern and northern Black families took their children’s education into their own hands by removing them from integrated racist schools and placing them in all-Black schools as a method of racial protection. These independent Black schools, referred to as Freedom Schools, included Highland Park Free School (1968), Roxbury Community School (1966), and the New School (1966) in Boston, Massachusetts. Highland Park Free School, the most well-known Freedom School, comprised of a Black nationalistic educational approach.

Black education were an example of self-determination and agency in building an independent Black community. Independent Black schools were established and comprised of Black teachers known to have high expectations, encourage students to achieve academically, and cultivate a strong cultural identity in students. However, as the U.S. became increasingly violent toward Black people, Black Nationalists and their organizations, including the Revolutionary Black Panther Party became more prominent.

**The Black Power and Post-Civil Rights Eras (1960-present)**

However, racial turmoil continued to ensue in the United States with the assassination of Malcolm X and the L.A. Watts Riots in 1965. In attempt to provide hope during an intense racial environment, in the following year, Maulana Karenga invented the *Nguzo Saba* (means *The Seven Principles* in Kiswahili) and systemized it as *Kwanzaa*. *Kwanzaa* is a national African American holiday honoring and celebrating African heritage, culture, identity,

*Kwanzaa* is not African in tradition. However, its principles are African in origin (Asante, 2003; Karenga, 1989; Houessou-Adin, 1995; Karenga, 2018). Karenga created an extended interpretation of Kiswahili terms principles and definitions for the Black community. The Kiswahili language system “is a language with distinct genetic linkage to the languages of the northeast, central, and southern Africa” (Bekerie, 1994, p. 144). Karenga intended to help build and reinforce unity or *umoja* among people of African ancestry as a “non-doctrinaire, non-denominational system of seven principles that promote and support” (Lee, 1992). Robinson and Jeremiah (2011) explained that:

> Karenga developed the Kwanza(a) principles in response to the need for African Americans to have a shared cultural identity that was most notably Africa. Like jazz, the African American experience is a unique experience, one that is not completely African or American but an amalgam of the two (p. 318).

*Kwanzaa* principles include: *umoja* or unity, *kujichagulia* or self-determination, *ujima* or collective work and responsibility, *ujamaa* or cooperative economics, *nia* or purpose, kuumba or creativity, and imani or faith. *Nia* or purpose and *Ujima* or collective work and responsibility are elements of agency. *Kujichagulia* or self-determination is connected to one’s commitment and practice as it mirrors agency, the action or activity in which one engages. According to Karenga, the *Kwanzaa* principle, *Kujichagulia* or self-determination, is defined as, “To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves” (Karenga, 2018). Agency and self-
determination are interconnected. This is apparent as Black people desired an education of their own. Independent Black schools are symbols of liberation and racial protectionism. The Seven Principles are further explored as features in the Black educational setting in chapters 4 and 5.

The Black Panther Party, a pro-Black nationalist organization promoted Black independence, agency, and self-determination. Black Nationalist survival programs and a Ten-Point Program, a philosophical guideline focuses on improving American institutions including education as one of its demands (The Black Panther Party, 1968).

As highlighted in the Ten-Point Program, point 5:

We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else. (The Black Panther Party, 1968)

Survival programs included Black Panther Schools, Free Food Programs, Free Schools, Freedom Schools, Intercommunal Youth Institute (IYI), Free Breakfast for Schoolchildren Program, Community Learning Center, and the Black Student Alliance (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, 2008). These programs provided academic and cultural resources to Black students during a time racism continued to impact Black students’ lives, especially in schools.

Similar to independent Black schools formerly established, the Black Panthers were intentional in providing the Black community a Black nationalist space to educate their children outside of American public and private schools. This initiative is an example of self-determination and agency among the Black community that has continued
throughout history. In 1974, the Intercommunal Youth Institute (IYI), renamed the Oakland Community School (OCS) as “A Model for Liberation,” promoted a liberatory curriculum to raise political consciousness and awareness among its students. According to the *Black Panther* (1971), an IYI student confessed, “Over here they teach us about what the pigs are doing to us” and about "philosophy, ideology, dialectical materialism, and stuff like that" (p. 76).

Bobby Seale, a Black Panther explained, "We're not here to teach our children WHAT to think. We’re here to teach our children HOW to think!” (as cited in Perlstein, 2002, p. 265). Students marched in Panther’s military uniforms and engaged in political discussions on “racism, capitalism, fascism, cultural nationalism, and socialism" (Perlstein, 2002, p. 262). IYI was a school that was invested in providing Black children a quality and equitable education that focused on cultivating young Black intellectuals.

Black Panther Schools were funded only by the Black community with special fundraising activities and individual donors. Black Panther Schools including IYI educated Black children in protective ways to continue in the legacy of love, respect, and self-reliance (Jones, 2005; Mazama, 2015a, 2015b; Mkandawire, 2005; West, 1972). These schools focused on helping children solve and analyze real-world issues. In 1971, one elementary school in Oakland's educational agenda promoted a nationalist and revolutionary pedagogy. Even children at the Free Breakfast Program discussed community issues such as police brutality (Perlstein, 2002). According to Stokely Carmichael (1970):

> We have to wake them up to the impending danger. So we yell, Gun! Shoot! Burn! Kill! Destroy! They're committing genocide! until the masses of our people are awake. Once they are awake, it is the job of the revolutionary
intelligentsia to give them the correct political ideology. (Carmichael, 1970, as cited in Perlstein, 2002, p. 260)

During this era, independent Black schools, including Black Panther schools, influenced the creation of new Black educational efforts as racism persisted. Afrocentric schools became a new-age strategy to continue in the legacy of the Black community’s agency and self-determination in the face of racial inequality.

**Afrocentric Schools**

Afrocentricity, a concept coined during the 1960s Civil Rights era by Molefi Kete Asante, is the product of many scholars (Hilliard, 1978; Karenga, 1986; Myers, 1993; Nobles, 1986; Richards, 1991). Carter G. Woodson (1933) was the first to examine the idea in his seminal text, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, when he explained how education in the United States leads the Black persons mental and cultural demise. Afrocentricity emerged as a new vision of Black education.

While the philosophical discussions of Afrocentricity, agreed upon or contested across the scholarly field, are not the focus of this chapter, it is imperative to recognize that there are advocates and critics of Afrocentricity. Asante (1991, 2003) describes public and private schools as offering a hegemonic education which reveals the importance of Afrocentric schools that are “rooted in the cultural image and human interests of African people” (Karenga, 1995, p. 45). Kwame Anthony Appiah, an African scholar, is one who critiques Afrocentricity and argues that Afrocentricity does two things: (a) it inadvertently does precisely what Europe had done in talking of itself superlatively and trashing all non-European cultures; and (b) Afrocentric ideology ignores the realism of African
peoples and experiences which like all those other humans, contain both good and
bad, true and false, etcetera, in their different understandings of the world
(Appiah, 1993). Appiah’s critique of Asante’s, Afrocentrism is in line with
Langston Hughes’ (1926) classic poem that became recognized as the so-called
“anthem” of the Harlem Renaissance. The poem is quoted below:

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our
individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white
people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn’t matter. We
know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the
tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are. If they are not,
their displeasure doesn’t matter either. We build our temples for
tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the
mountain, free within ourselves. (Hughes, 1926)

Just as reflected in and suggested by Langston Hughes’ poem, people of
African heritage should identify and look at the world through the lens of African
people that have been provided by the historians of African knowledge.
Afrocentricity is not anti-White but grounded in the legacy of Black culture and
excellence (Harper, 2007).

Afrocentric education focuses on African people, geography, culture, and
language. Afrocentric education challenges White supremacy inherent in public
and private schools in the United States. Afrocentric education places the history
and contemporary cultural context and experiences of Black culture at the
that:

The Afrocentric model emphasizes the contributions of Black in all
vital areas of the country’s establishment as a world power. From
the perspective of identity development, this accomplishes two
important goals: It validates the words and lives of one’s
predecessors, and affords a space for the individual expressions of the present. (p. 235)

Afrocentric education is culturally relevant to African American students (Shockley et al., 2015). It places the history and contemporary cultural context and experiences of Black culture at the forefront of curriculum and instruction (Asante, 1988). According to Murrell (1999), the seven features of Afrocentric schools, include the: (a) teaching of Black history through Our Story, (b) cultural practice of African-centered rituals and traditions, (c) exercise of Kiswahili, (d) encouragement of Black entrepreneurship for the uplift of the Black community, (e) promotion of a familial relationship, (f) the promotion of the Kwanzaa principles, and (g) the facilitation of critical conversations connected to issues impacting the Black community. According to Giddings (2001), Afrocentric education attempts to accomplish five goals which are achieved at BSA:

1. Culturally affirming students’ lives
2. Challenge racism and hegemony
3. Provide differentiated learning styles
4. Promoting a positive self-concept and collective identity among Black students
5. Stand as a model to multicultural education

Afrocentric education focuses on the experiences and perspectives of Black people at the core of its curriculum. It calls for the re-centering of content that focuses on the Black experience, African perspective, and liberation of the Black person and community (Houessou-Adin, 1995; Shockley & Frederick, 2015; Teasley et al., 2016). Afrocentric education is designed to liberate Black students who have been historically marginalized and disenfranchised through the indoctrination of European history and culture that has contributed to slavery,
racial segregation, and discrimination. Afrocentric curriculum consists of four key goals to affirming Black students’ lives, including: challenging racism and hegemony, providing differentiated learning styles, promoting a positive self-concept and collective identity among Black students, and a model for multicultural education (Giddings, 2001).

According to Shockley and Frederick (2010), “Afrocentric educationists attempt to offer methods, ideas, and concepts that are best suitable for reaching children of African descent” (p. 1213). The goal of Afrocentric educationists is to create an education for Black students “where the focus could be on loving oneself and practicing one’s own culture, focusing on oneself as the subject of history instead of the object of someone else’s stories, accepting the anteriority of the early African civilizations, and attempting to construct a unified, pan-Africanist reality for people of African descent” (Shockley and Frederick, 2010, p. 1221).

Dr. Wade Nobles, an Afrocentrist and Black Psychologist, instituted an African-centered curriculum with the goal to re-center, refine, recover, reproduce, and reclaim Black identity (Giddings, 2001). According to Madhubuti & Madhubuti (1994), “When we argue for an African-centered education, it is not at the expense or exclusion of an enlightened Western education; rather, it is an important addition to this knowledge base” (p. 7). According to Harper (2007):

Grounded in African American culture and history, this approach encourages children to structure their behaviors, values, and attitudes towards school in a manner that emphasizes cooperation, respect, and commitment… Schools that incorporate an Afrocentric curriculum provide instruction in Black history, cultural and political awareness, self-regulation, and community service in an
effort to encourage African American students to view their ethnic identity in a positive manner. (p. 235)

Black scholars, many of whom would be considered Afrocentrists in today’s popular use of the concept, due to their academic contributions, such as Asa G. Hilliard III, Molefi K. Asante, Cheikh Anta Diop, Carol D. Lee, and Joyce King have argued that studying Africa and the contributions of African people is likely to increase in Black students’ interest in learning (Gordon, 1994). Afrocentrists have played an integral role on the development of Black independent schools throughout history. Between 1993 and 1999, Afrocentric schools, whether public, charter, or homeschoools, drastically increased from 20 to 400 schools (Murrell, 1999).

Charter schools, an option to replace academically failing schools, include Afrocentric charter schools that have increased for the purpose of providing parents a choice in deciding the type of education they want their child to have. The idea of choice is particularly appealing to Black parents who are often not given schooling options for their children beyond U.S. public and private schools which explains the increase in Afrocentric charter schools. According to Teasley et al. (2016), 27 charter schools identified as Afrocentric in the U.S. However, charter schools have been largely unsuccessful in showing an increase in student achievement. Some charter schools, such as Afrocentric charter schools that have been largely concerned with standardized testing and competing with public and private schools, have had worse student outcomes than public schools (Teasley et al., 2016).
Afrocentric schools—public, charter, and homeschoold— are increasing as an educational option and response to inequitable public schools that have historically disenfranchised students in cities with a large Black population such as Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, New York, Atlanta, New Orleans, and the District of Columbia (Mcentire, 2017; Shapiro, 2019). Seven Afrocentric public and charter schools are highlighted in Table 2, including Ember Charter School, Nairobi Day School, New Concept Development Center, Betty Shabazz International Charter Schools, J.S. Chick Elementary School, W. E. B. DuBois Academy, and Carter G. Woodson Academy. In addition, five Afrocentric homeschool collectives are highlighted in Table 2: Kamali Academy, Urban Village Academy, BlackStar Afrocentric Homeschool, Black Star Academy Home School Co-op, and Ujima: Children of the Sun Homeschool Collective. It is unclear whether a few of these Afrocentric schools are still in existence. Table 2 illustrates features of Afrocentric education—public, charter, and homeschool collectives—as cited mostly in the literature on Afrocentric schools in the United States. Afrocentric elements in these schools reflect a Black cultural pride in the content and lessons, connection to familial or kinship ties, and the need to learn the truth about Black history while challenging inaccurate history learned in previous public and private schools (Lee, 1992).

On Table 2, the plus sign signifies an Afrocentric feature present at a school. The minus sign indicates that a particular Afrocentric quality was not present at a school. An asterisk symbolizes unknown or unavailable information provided about an Afrocentric school in the literature. Themes found across
Afrocentric schools, consolidated into categories and listed in Table 2, are provided as a narrative in the Appendix.

**Table 2**

*The Features of Afrocentric Schools Expanded (public, charter, and homeschools)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Afrocentric Public and Charter Schools</th>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Rituals</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ember Charter School</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairobi Day School</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Concept Development Center</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty Shabazz International Charter Schools</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.S. Chick Elementary School</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. E. B. DuBois Academy</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carter G. Woodson Academy</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Afrocentric Homeschools (School Name)</th>
<th>Culture (School Name)</th>
<th>Rituals</th>
<th>Curriculum (Cultural Pride)</th>
<th>Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### Agentic and Self-Determination.

Afrocentric education is culturally relevant to Black students (Shockley et al., 2015). Afrocentric schools reflect the Black community’s agency and self-determination to start their own schools to define themselves and acquire an education for their advancement (Foster, 1992; King, 1994; Lee, 1992; Lomotey, 1992; Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987). Across Afrocentric schools, there are five features that are commonly found, including (a) Black history lessons, (b) Afrocentric traditions and rituals, (c) familial relationships, (d) holistic education, and (e) the presence of predominately Black teachers.

First, Black history is taught across subjects from an Afrocentric perspective. Second, traditions and rituals are practiced in Afrocentric schools, some of which have more than one ritual. Afrocentric rituals include but are not limited to the practice of guiding principles, such as the *Nguzo Saba* or The Seven
Principles of Kwanzaa, recitations of African proverbs and poems, and a partial or full Afrocentric uniform requirement, consisting of specific colors to symbolize a unified culture among a group of people, are commonly found in Afrocentric schools. African storytelling practices, call-and-response techniques, poetry, African drumming, music, proverbs, and discussions of social justice and debates on Black culture history are also present (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Johnson, 2016; Mazama, 2012, 2015; Tenney, 2012). According to Irvin (1989), “There are many instances of repetition, call and response, variation in pace, high emotional involvement, creative analogies, figurative language, vowel elongations, catch phrases, gestures, body movements, symbolism, aphorisms, and lively discussions with students’ participating often and spontaneously” (p. 60). Third, Afrocentric schools provide a holistic education complete with differentiated instruction and student-choice to address the academic and cultural needs of Black students (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013). Fourth, familial relationships are present in the culturally affirming name, mission, vision, motto, and symbols in Afrocentric schools. Kinship terms that reflect Black history and culture such as sisters, brothers, Warriors, Kings, and Queens are often found to express a familial culture. Fifth, Afrocentric schools consist of a predominately Black teacher population that serves as role models and mentors to Black students (Teasley et al., 2016).

A quantification of the Afrocentric features at the schools is provided in the following narrative in connection to Tables 1 and 2. In the category of identity, all of the schools had aspects of Afrocentric education, including familial
relationships, Black-culture informed instructional practices, and holistic education. In the category of culture, nine schools out of 12 had an Afrocentric name. In the category of rituals, eight schools out of 12 engaged in traditions to classify these schools as Afrocentric. Of the 12 schools, the rituals of four schools were unknown as this information was unavailable on the literature describing these schools. Essentially, the only inconsistent features of Afrocentric schools were in two categories: culture and rituals. Although not all features of Afrocentricity in Tables 1 and 2 were found across these Afrocentric schools, due to limited literature on Black homeschools in general, it does not mean that they were not present in these schools. Majority of these features of Afrocentricity are present in the analysis of the homeschool collective analyzed in this study and discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

The most salient schools with a 100 percent across all of the Afrocentric features, include the presence of an (a) Afrocentric School Name, (b) Holistic Education, (c) the presence of a majority of Black Teachers, and (d) an emphasis on cultural pride. Across all Afrocentric features, the main goal of self-empowerment and cultural pride are key themes found in these schools as influenced by key political movements across eras, including the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, the Nation of Islam, and the role of the Black Panthers. The goal of Afrocentric schools is to provide a revolutionary education for students. Afrocentric education is figuratively and literally a pathway to freedom. The curriculum is infused with Black history, culture, and identity. Afrocentric
schools are providing a quality and equitable culturally responsive education to Black students in public and private schools.

A national landscape of homeschooling as a new way to educate children, especially Black children in a racist society, is provided in the following section.

A National Landscape of Homeschooling

National Statistics

By the mid-1980s to the 1990s, homeschooling increased considerably with the dominant and grand narrative and research on White Christian homeschoolers, who were concerned with their children’s academic development (Reich, 2002). Leading research on homeschooling focuses largely on White homeschoolers (Sherman, 2012). By 1993, homeschooling was legal in 50 States. However, reports on homeschoolers have been racially ambiguous from 1999 to 2003 as data analysis did not specifically focus on racial categories for reasons beyond the scope of this research (Sherman, 2012).

Homeschooling has increased over time, but it has increased mostly with Black students. The United States Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) has the largest collection of research on homeschoolers than any other research-based organization. In 2006, there were 1.1 million homeschoolers that increased 29% from the 850,000 homeschoolers in 1999 in the United States (NCES, 2006). In general, homeschooling has increased 77% from 1999 to 2007 (Slife, 2011). According to Slife (2011), “In 2007, 3.9% of all Caucasian students were home-schooled compared with just 0.8% of African-American students.” By 2010, there was a 90% increase in Black
homeschoolers (Noel et al., 2013; Ray, 2015). In 2011, Black students accounted for nearly 15% of the 2 million homeschool students in the country. Since 2011, Black homeschoolers have increased significantly (Fields-Smith &., 2013; Ray, 2011; Sherman, 2012; Slife, 2011). Black students comprise of an estimated 10% of the homeschooling population (Holloway Talley, 2017b; Huseman, 2015; Manyando, 2016; Mazama, 2012, 2015). Homeschooling rates by race and ethnicity reveal that from 2012 to 2016, 1.9% of Black students and 1.5% of Asian/Pacific Islander were homeschooled. Furthermore, while the Asian/Pacific Islander homeschoolers decreased by 1.1% (73,000 to 48,000 in 4 years), Blacks remained steady (“Homeschool Demographics,” n.d.).

Recent research in 2015 reveals that there are nearly 2.3 million school-aged children entering homeschools across the country (Ray, 2015). In 2015, out of that population, there were 220,000 Black homeschooling families making the Black community the second largest racial group of homeschoolers (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Johnson, 2016; NCES, 2016; Ray, 2015; Sherman, 2012; Tenney, 2012).

NCES (2016) indicates that there are approximately 290,000 African American homeschooled children. Homeschooling is a viable option or alternative for Black families (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Mazama & Lundy, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015). Black families have homeschooled their children as a response to the unfulfilled promises of the Brown decision and a symbol of political and sociocultural protest against anti-Black politics and public and private schools. According to Fields-Smith (2009), “Although Brown v. Board of Education
passed in 1954 mandated the integration of public schools... Black families reported that home schooling offered greater access to fully integrated educational experiences for their children” (p. 377).

Many Black families are homeschooling their children to racially protect them from White teachers with a culture of low teacher expectations, low teacher morale, and a hostile environment (Burges, 2012; Emanuel, 2016; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Huseman, 2015 King, 2005; Mazama, 2015a, 2015b; Nembhard, 2005; Penn-Nabrit, 2003; Raton, 2014; Steele & Aronson, 1995). The Black homeschool movement is a reactionary response to anti-Black struggles as the political climate in the United States grows increasingly racist and oppressive.

Although seldom described, homeschool students are accepted to Ivy League and prestigious colleges such as Spelman, Morehouse, Princeton, Harvard, Dartmouth, and Howard. The successes of Black homeschooled students are not only taking place behind the scenes with limited publicity but are visible in popular culture. Some famous Black homeschooled students include award-winning comedian/actor Whoopi Goldberg, NFL veteran Jason Taylor, Olympic Gold Medalist Simone Biles, and professional Basketball player Blake Griffin (Lee, 2012). One celebrity Black family, in particular, Will and Jada Pinkett-Smith, have homeschooled their children and supported homeschooling. For many in the Black community, the Black homeschool movement is a reactionary response to racism that has had and continues to have positive implications for Black students.
A Scholarly Dialogue

Dr. Brian D. Ray, the founder of the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) that includes an academic journal and annual conference on home education, has researched homeschooling for over 30 years. Ray has written and published the most research on homeschoolers, deeming him as the lead researcher on homeschooling in the United States. His research primarily focuses on White southern and religious homeschool families. However, Ray has also conducted research on the academic trends among Black and White homeschool students. His research reveals positive trends among Black homeschoolers with a focus on academic performance that is not comprehensive or inclusive of larger research participant populations in the United States (Johnson, 2016; Ray, 2015, 2018; Richards, 2016). Ray’s research certainly breaks ground in documenting the academic outcomes of Black homeschooling but fails to establish causation and explore race and culture.

Dr. Ama Mazama, formerly known as Marie-Josée Céro, is one of the leading Afrocentric scholars on Black homeschoolers in the United States who has criticized Ray’s study as racially unrepresentative of the homeschool population since it did not focus on Black homeschoolers. In response, Mazama and Lundy (2013) conducted a small study of 74 Black homeschool families throughout the United States to draw more conclusive evidence of the motivations that Black families homeschool. According to Mazama (2015a), Black families homeschool their children for particular reasons that include the following from the most prevalent to the least prevalent: (a) concern about the environment of
other schools; (b) moral instruction; and (c) dissatisfaction with academic instruction at other schools. Black parents are dissatisfied with academic instruction in public schools as: (a) preservice teachers are often ill-prepared; (b) the presence of Black teachers in schools continues to decrease; and (c) the curriculum and instruction is largely White and culturally-exclusionary (Mazama, 2015a, 2015b). However, the primary reason that Black families homeschool their children is to protect them from racism (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Mazama, 2012; Mazama & Lundy, 2012; Mazama, 2012, 2015; Puga, 2019; Ray, 2015). Black families are dissatisfied with public and private schools which is the chief reason they are seeking to rectify the omissions of Black identity and culture prevalent in public and private schools (Emanuel, 2016; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Mazama, 2001; Smith, 2003). Black families are homeschooling their children as a form of racial protectionism, a term coined by Ama Mazama, as a method of racial security (Mazama, 2015a, 2015b; Mazama & Lundy, 2012).

According to Mazama and Lundy (2012):

Racial protectionists shared the view that schools, public or private, could not, given the racist nature of American society, be emotionally safe for Black children. Racism was talked about as an inevitable fact of American life and schools as a place where Black children were bound to experience dire racial oppression and hostility in the form of the suppression of African American cultural identity and imposition of Whiteness as the ideal norm. (p. 734)

Racism, including the high rates of the unjust killings of countless unarmed Black men and women at the hands of the fraternal order of police, is the primary determinant in Black parents’ decision to homeschool their children. The goal is to protect them from racism in the larger society and schools. Protecting
Black students from racism, a form of violence in school, is especially important as public schools, with a predominately White staff, tend to punish Black students more harshly than White students and where students are expected to engage in an anti-Black curriculum where high-stakes testing and rigid curricular demands negatively impact the academic achievement and cultural development of Black students, especially Black males, which has implications for widening the school-to-prison pipeline (Barras, 2015; Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Fulmore, 2017; Mazama, 2015a, 2015b; Mazama & Lundy, 2012, 2013, 2015; Mcentire, 2017; Raton, 2014; Ray, 2015; Sherman, 2012; Tenney, 2012). Thus, Black parents are protecting Black children from being placed in special education and suspended from school due to cultural misunderstandings that have existed between White teachers and Black students (Barras, 2015; Tenney, 2012).

Conclusion

This chapter explores the historical evolution of Black education in the United States with a particular emphasis on Kentucky within four eras: the Antebellum Period (1619-1865), characterized by the institution of slavery and secret educational efforts; Reconstruction Period (1865-1930), consisting of the government and philanthropic-funded segregated schools; the Jim Crow and Civil Rights Period (1930-1960), during which racial inequality led to integration laws and the development of new educational alternatives in the Black community; and the Black Power and Post-Civil Rights Period (1960-present), comprised of pro-Black schools and the Black homeschool movement.
Historically, Black people have used education as one tactic to legitimize their status as human beings who are fully capable of learning and contributing to society beyond their legal imposition as racially oppressed (Butchart, 2010; Williams, 2005). Black people determined what they wanted to learn and what was important to them as they fought to learn to read and write while rejecting racial oppression, paternalism, and subordination. Despite anti-literacy laws, and later, Jim Crow laws, Black people continued to fight for an education and went out and got it for themselves. According to Lomotey (2010), independent Black schools were “truly a testament to the self-determination and value African Americans-free or freed-placed on literacy” (p. 558). Independent Black schools are a democratic and revolutionary response to Black people seeking literacy and knowledge despite the greatest of dangers. These schools promote the self-sustaining efforts among the Black community across historical eras and continues the legacy of early Black education.

Historically, racism has negatively impacted the Black community and Black people’s way of life, including the way in which they educate their children. The establishment of independent Black schools, including today’s homeschools is an act of resistance against the status quo, especially during slavery when the living conditions of Black people were not only different from today, but more severe. The living conditions of Black people during the antebellum era caused for a type of bravery that is nearly unfathomable due to the context of the time which required organized revolt against anti-Black laws. A type of resistance that remains pertinent today. In comparison to the
individualized killings of Black people today, during the antebellum period, Black people have displayed extreme bravery as they stood against racist legislation that allowed the torturing and killing of large groups of Black people.

Many Black families have opted for an educational alternative and community control with homeschooling as one viable option for Black people in search of belonging and cultural pride (Gaither, 2017; Harper, 2007; West, 1972). Black families are creating independent Black schools in their homes by homeschooling their children. The choice to educate Black children in the home or in a home-like environment, serves as an example of the Black community’s agency and self-determination that continues in the legacy of early Black schools that were developed to racially protect children and lead to the uplift of the Black community, especially Black homeschools. As highlighted in the literature on the history of Black education in the United States, the most salient elements found in the creation of independent Black schools across historical periods are reflective of agency, self-determination, liberation, and racial protectionism. These four elements are not only significant throughout the literature on early Black schools, but present in the contemporary roles and responsibilities of Black teachers to increase the presence of Black teachers, offer a pro-Black curriculum, and improve Black students’ lives. According to Love (2019):

Educating Black children was viewed as the collective responsibility of the community. Schools were the anchors for the Black community, and teachers were leaders inside and outside school walls. Schools represented spaces of solidarity places to build power amid White rage. Schools were the foundation of moving toward thriving (p. 28).
The philosophy of Afrocentricity is not the focus of this dissertation. This qualitative case study focuses on one Black homeschool collective that happens to be Afrocentric that makes the concept relevant and appropriate. While there are three Black homeschool collectives and many Black individual families who homeschool their children in Kentucky, this study focuses on one. Black Scholars Academy (BSA), an Afrocentric homeschool collective, continues the legacy of early Black educational efforts in the quest for liberation through literacy. The next chapter provides the methodology of how this research study was conducted and highlights the theoretical framework, procedures, approaches, methods, and phases of classroom observations and individual interviews of seven research study participants.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

_I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions - a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom._

—bell hooks

Study Overview

This dissertation investigates the history and evolution of independent Black schools, the emergence of Black homeschooleds, and the philosophical underpinnings, including the Afrocentric features of the teachers’ curricular choices and instructional practices at BSA. This qualitative study, conducted during the 2019-2020 school year, explores Black Scholars Academy (BSA), a Black homeschool collective located in Louisville, Kentucky. This qualitative study consists of six full days of classroom observations and individual interviews with the research participants for an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the research. The current teacher at BSA was contacted for permission to conduct a study to explore the experiences and perceptions of teachers and students at this Black homeschool collective. Data were collected for four months from July 2019 to November 2019 at BSA. This data focused on the perceptions and experiences of three teachers—one current teacher, two former teachers, and four current students in 5th through 12th grades.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this dissertation:
1. What salient features are present in the curriculum and instruction at BSA?
2. How were familial relationships beneficial to the Afrocentric vision, mission, and goals of this homeschool collective?
3. How did familial relationships influence the curricular choices and instructional practices at BSA?
4. How does this Afrocentric feature educate to liberate and return students to their traditional greatness?

Data were derived from interviews with two former teachers and one current teacher at BSA when this homeschool collective was a Black Panther School and after it returned to its original model as an Afrocentric homeschool collective. Familial relationships were salient across the iterations of BSA. Classroom learning events and activities at this homeschool collective contained Afrocentric features to “educate to liberate” and return Black students to their “traditional greatness.” JSTOR, an online database of peer-reviewed articles, was used to search words and concepts, including Afrocentricity, Black Education, Homeschool, Homeschool Collectives, and Independent Black Schools. Chapters 1 and 2 highlight these Afrocentric features. Chapters 4 and 5 investigate, analyze, and interpret these features.

**Research Site**

Founded in 2013, BSA is a Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) to 12th grade homeschool collective. From 2013 to 2019, the location of BSA changed five times. First, in 2013, BSA was identified with its former name—Star Seeds Non-Public School located in a rental space that was shared with another organization in an office building. Second, in 2015, during the pilot study when BSA represented an original Afrocentric school model, the homeschool collective was located in a rental space in an office building with other businesses. Third, in
2017, after BSA was affiliated with the Revolutionary Black Panther Party, the collective moved to a larger space that was attached to another business. Fourth, in April of 2019, BSA was evicted from the building due to the inability to pay the monthly rent. As a result, the collective temporarily operated in a Catholic church in a predominantly Black community for free. Fifth, in August 2019, BSA was rebranded with its original Afrocentric model and relocated to a branch of the public library that did not require a lease or rental space. Classroom observations and individual interviews with the students and teachers, conducted at the library, the location of BSA.

**Research Participants**

By the 2019-2020 school year, the student and teacher population decreased as there were seven students and one teacher—all of whom identified as Black or African-American. During this school year, there was one teacher, Yala, and seven students from 3 to 17 years old were enrolled at BSA. The student-to-teacher ratio is 7:1 with two females and five males who are predominately Black or African-American. One student identifies as “biracial” or as having two or more races (specifically White and Black). This homeschool collective is separated into two cohorts by age and grade level, an early childhood group of three students in Pre-Kindergarten and an older group of four students between 5th and 12th grade. This study focuses only on the older group of students. Individual profiles of the five research participants are provided through interviews and classroom observations to offer insight into the experiences and perceptions of teachers and students.
Research Phases

Data for this study includes interviews with three teachers (current and former), and four current students and transcriptions of six classroom observations at BSA. This research was conducted in five phases, emphasizing the following research methods and procedures: (a) communication for teacher interviews; (b) teacher transcription and data coding; (c) classroom observations, student interviews, transcription, and data coding; and (d) data analysis and triangulation. Table 3 offers a description of each of the five phases of this study, including the data collection, coding, and analysis processes. All phases were completed by October 2021.

**TABLE 3**

*Phases of Data Collection, Coding and Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE I</th>
<th>Informal Visit to BSA. A pilot study was conducted to tour the BSA, interview the current teacher, and observe the classroom dynamics in preparation for a dissertation study. This began and was completed in May 2017.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHASE II</td>
<td>Teacher Communication. This phase focused on contacting and communicating with three teachers (one current and two former) affiliated with BSA. The purpose was to schedule separate and individual interviews with the teachers. This phase spanned from April 2019 through February 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE III</td>
<td>Teacher Interviews, Transcription and Data Coding. A transcription of separate and individual interviews with three teachers at BSA were transcribed, coded, and analyzed prior to the classroom observation and student interview phases. This phase ranged from July 2019 through November 2020.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHASE IV</td>
<td>Classroom Observations, Student Interviews, Transcription and Data Coding. Six classroom observation sessions were conducted over the course of three weeks at BSA. Four observations were conducted. The final two observations were held two weeks later due to rescheduling. Four students were involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
as the study participants. Student interviews were transcribed and coded for data analysis purposes. This phase spanned from October 2019 through November 2019.

| PHASE V   | Data Analysis and Triangulation. Data collected were consolidated and an analysis was conducted with a focus on Afrocentric features present at BSA. A data analysis of the patterns found across the classroom observations, and teacher and student interviews were triangulated. This phase spanned from July 2019 through October 2021. |

Preliminary Procedures: Recruitment and Selection of Participants

Prior to phase one, there were preliminary procedures to recruit and select research participants initiated by a conversation with Yala, the founder and current teacher of BSA. Yala was contacted about the study which she was already knowledgeable of due to an informal visit to BSA in 2017 in preparation for a dissertation study. This study used a convenience sample as I knew the people who were affiliated with BSA either formerly or during the time that the study was conducted.

**Phase I: Informal Visit to BSA**

In May 2017, informal research, similar to a pilot study, was conducted on this homeschool to offer insight and background on BSA. My interest in Black homeschoolers led to an informal visit to BSA, one classroom observation, and one semi-structured interview and conversation with the current teacher, student, and the student’s mother at the same time.

Upon conducting this informal research in 2017, I researched the website of the homeschool collective to learn more about its history, mission, and vision. The interview with the current teacher was held at the location of BSA in a leased office space that was furnished with tables, chairs, desktop computers,
multicultural books, and teaching materials and supplies. Framed pictures of Black intellectuals such as Malcolm X lined the wall. A school flag— the African or Black Nationalist flag also hung in the front of the class. The environment of the homeschool collective was visibly Afrocentric.

One 30-minute open-ended and primarily non-interruptive interview was conducted with the current teacher, a former student, and the student’s mother at BSA. This interview explored Yala’s teaching background and experience, as well as engaged in an impromptu conversation with a student and her mother about BSA, the motivations to homeschool, and the homeschooling experience from the student and parent's perspectives. During this interview, a conversation developed on the Nguzo Saba or The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa and Our Story. After this interview, one full-day classroom observation was conducted during which the current teacher and students engaged in a math lesson on percentages. The lesson led to a critical conversation about the importance of education in the prevention of generational poverty and the mass incarceration of Black people in the United States. Both the informal interview and classroom observation were transcribed, coded, categorized, and analyzed. Features of Afrocentric education were present in the presence of familial relationships, Our Story, and entrepreneurship. While features of Afrocentric education were found during the interview and classroom observation, it was unclear whether these characteristics were consistently present across the BSA curriculum. Due to limited time and data collected, I was unable to determine significant patterns of Afrocentric education until I conducted a formal study during the 2019-2020 school year.
Phase II: Teacher Communication and Building Rapport

This phase focused on contacting, communicating, and building a rapport with three teachers (one current and two former) affiliated with BSA. Separate and individual interviews were scheduled with the teachers based on their flexibility and availability. Yala, the founder and current teacher was contacted for an interview in April 2019 during which she approved my dissertation study and revealed that there were two additional teachers at BSA since my informal research on the homeschool collective in 2017.

After I received their contact information, I attempted to contact Yala several times throughout the month leading to June 2019. However, our communication was inconsistent as my phone calls were not always returned. In an effort to move forward with my study as planned under the approval of Yala, I contacted the two additional teachers and began the interview process as their schedules were flexible and communication was effective. After the interviews with the two former teachers were complete, I was able to reach the current teacher for an interview and to schedule classroom observations for the 2019-2020 school year.

I collaborated with the research participants to build trust through open communication. Charmaz (2014) explains that “Strong bonds build trust and foster open conversations with research participants about areas ordinarily left unspoken” (p. 211). Through collaborative research with the participants, my goal is to do no harm. Open communication between the researcher and teacher participants were important across the data collection phase. Conversations
through phone, email, and in-person meetings with the current and former homeschool teachers at BSA were integral. These conversations ensured that the researcher and participants effectively communicated.

**Phase III: Teacher Interviews, Transcription and Data Coding**

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews with the current teacher and two former teachers at BSA to provide additional historical context of the Afrocentric homeschool that formerly existed as a Black Panther School. An interview with the current teacher offered insight into the historical background of BSA, how it evolved, and her expectations for the collective for the upcoming 2019-2020 school year.

Individual face-to-face interviews with the three teachers were conducted, transcribed, and coded prior to phase four consisting of classroom observations and student interviews. One interview was conducted with Daniece and three interviews were conducted with Quinn, both former teachers at BSA. The initial objective was to interview Yala, the current teacher first as the founder of BSA. However, due to a series of delays and setbacks in receiving a response from her, two former BSA teachers were interviewed first instead. After interviews with the two former teachers were conducted, Yala was contacted again, and a teacher interview and classroom observations were scheduled.

Individual interviews with the two former BSA teachers were conducted in July 2019 before the 2019-2020 school year began. Both interviews were held at the headquarters of the Revolutionary Black Panther Party in Louisville, Kentucky. Interviews with the former teachers were informative in offering
background information on how the homeschool collective underwent major changes with the separation from the Revolutionary Black Panther Party and its two members as BSA teachers that is examined in chapter 4.

In September 2019, two weeks before the first day of the 2019-2020 school year at BSA, I scheduled two separate interviews with Yala. The first interview was on September 5th, 2019 for 1-hour. The second interview was on September 6th, 2019 for approximately 1.5 hours. I also spoke informally and conversationally with Yala throughout classroom observations. Interviews and conversations with Yala were held at the public library which was the location of the homeschool collective. An audio recording device and observation notebook were used during interviews. Interviews with teachers’ participants were non-invasive, non-interruptive, and conversational-style (Leavy, 2015). According to Leavy (2015), interviews were “narrative inducing” to promote storytelling in the exploration of the teachers’ homeschooling journey, philosophy on teaching, educational background, teaching experience, and instructional choices. The “narrative inducing” was ideal for me to listen to the interviewee without much interruption. A biographical narrative interpretive method was also used to rely on a minimal passive interviewing technique where “‘noninterruption’ is practiced” (Leavy, 2015, p. 32). I mostly nodded and made short utterances to show that I was listening and interested in the participants’ response. The interview approach displayed respect of the participant, the value of storytelling, and time orientation. Semi-structured interview questions allowed for a personal conversation with teachers that led to a discussion on sensitive and personal life experiences.
Two former teachers were interviewed twice on two different dates to accommodate time commitments between the participant and researcher. Interviews were each ideally scheduled to last for approximately 45-60 minutes in length. However, due to an extended conversation with each individual teacher, an interview eventually ranged from 2.5 to 4 hours. With each teacher interviewed twice, there were six interview sessions across the three teachers for a total of approximately 9 hours of audio recordings. Upon completion of the teacher interviews, I transcribed teacher interviews. I also used a professional transcription service to transcribe two interview sessions of one of the former teachers, Quinn, as his interview was the lengthiest. One of the two interviews with Daniece was also transcribed by this service. Transcriptions of audio recordings were coded and categorized for triangulation during the analysis process.

Based on teacher interviews, a description of each teacher was constructed in the form of a profile to further describe their educational background and journey as homeschool teachers. I chose to use data collected from the interviews of these two former teachers as they shared valuable information and context about the evolution of BSA. This information was compared to themes found at BSA during classroom observations. I received valuable information about past curriculum, interactions with former and current students, and tensions that led to a change in the school. Interviews were conducted, audio recorded, and documented with notes. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to be more relaxed in sharing their stories and engage in a conversational-style
interview and also provided an opportunity for follow-up questions throughout the study. This phase ranged from July 2019 through September 2019.

**Phase IV: Classroom Observations, Student Interviews, Transcription and Data Collection**

**Classroom Observations.** This phase consisted of six classroom observations at BSA over the course of 1-month from October 2019 to November 2019. BSA met three times a week on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. I conducted classroom observations on the two days when the collective met at the library on Wednesdays (guided by the Kwanzaa principle *Ujamaa* or Cooperative Economics) and Thursdays (guided by the Kwanzaa principle *Nia* or Purpose) at the library. Classroom observations included six full-day sessions at BSA across two months. The first of six classroom observations at BSA began on October 9, 2019, the official first day of the 2019-2020 school year. Mondays and Tuesdays were designated to individualized instruction during home visits. Wednesdays and Thursdays were designated for the teacher and student to meet collectively at the library. Fridays were designated to field trips. Classroom observations were only held on Wednesdays and Thursdays during collective meetings.

The first observational session included an introduction of the researcher to the students and an explanation of the study for student recruitment purposes. During the initial observation, it was noticed that the seven BSA students were divided into two groups or cohorts. One group of three Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) students were African American boys under five years old. The other included four students of various ages and grade levels from 5th through 12th grade. By the
end of the first observation and school day, the older group of students were selected and recruited specifically to participate in this study as themes immediately emerged during classroom discussion between the students and teachers and/or among students themselves.

Before the homeschool collective was dismissed, I distributed an informational packet to the older students who were present. The packet included: (a) a recruitment letter, (b) consent and assent forms requesting voluntary participation, (c) a description of the research study and eligibility requirements, and (d) a brief demographic survey for both the students and teachers to complete. Students eligible to participate in this study were required to complete, sign, and submit the student assent forms and parental/guardian consent forms within the next week of my classroom observation. All four students who submitted the completed forms were selected and approved to participate in this study.

Establishing a rapport with participants throughout this study was essential to my role as a researcher. Following an introduction to the potential student participants at BSA as a Black woman, author, and researcher from their community—the largest predominately African-American community in Louisville, Kentucky—a rapport and relationship between me, the teacher, and the students. The teacher and students were interested in my research and excited about their contribution to helping increase literature on Black homeschools. As an insider, Yala interacted with me as though I was official support staff. Students spoke with me freely at various times throughout classroom observations. Yala also solicited recommendations from me during whole-class conversations. On a
few occasions, I offered unsolicited redirection to assist Yala as needed. The students’ willingness to talk to me about their experiences revealed that they were comfortable and not distracted by my presence. I observed the classroom while sitting at a table near the students. I wanted them to see that I was attentive to the teacher as well.

While I didn’t intend to offer an incentive to the research participants due to the lack of a budget, upon completion of the data analysis of this research, I decided to donate a collection of my personal books to BSA upon the completion of the data collection phase. Table 4 provides a list of the classroom observations:

Table 4
Classroom Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 9, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 10, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 16, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 17, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 7, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 8, 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data were collected through classroom observation field notes, interview transcripts, and textual artifacts. Data included photos and scanned copies of instructional materials and student work samples that were collected and reviewed. An audio recorder and a notebook for field notes were used during classroom observations and individual interviews. Audio recordings and written documentation were later transcribed and used in phase five during the data analysis process to investigate the homeschool collective’s: (a) routine, schedule, and events, (b) curriculum-based content and materials, (c) instructional or
teaching approaches, (d) student-teacher discussion and student-student interactions. In an effort to maintain the integrity of data, sensitive and identifying information was made confidential. Research data are stored and accessed only in an isolated workspace, such as the Co-researcher’s private library carrel and/or a password protected computer and/or the PI’s office, both located on campus at the University of Louisville.

**Student Interviews and Transcription.** Throughout the six classroom observations, student interviews were scheduled and conducted either during or after the school day. I conducted one individual interview with four current BSA students that lasted approximately 40 minutes to 1-hour for this study.

**Table 5**

*Individual Student Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mia</td>
<td>October 17, 2019</td>
<td>1 hour and 8 minutes or a little over 1-hour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isis</td>
<td>November 8, 2019</td>
<td>45 minutes or a little over 30 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>October 17, 2019</td>
<td>43 minutes or a little over 30 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blair</td>
<td>October 10, 2019</td>
<td>42 minutes or a little over 30 minutes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individual interviews with students were conducted at the time of the students’ lunch break on separate days at the location of BSA—the library. The researcher conducted one individual interview that was face-to-face with each of the four student participants. Interviews with students were scheduled and held during school hours after a student completed an assignment, or at lunch time. Student interviews provide evaluative evidence of students’ progress over the course of this study. Student interviews varied in length and ranged from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. Interview questions were child-friendly (simplified) to
solicit direct responses pertaining to students’: (a) previous and current educational perceptions and experiences in comparison to their homeschooling experience, (b) academic and racial/cultural identity development since being homeschooled, (c) relationship with the teachers and other students at BSA, and (d) the curriculum and instructional practices at BSA.

Interview questions were direct and open-ended with a particular focus on the participants’ educational background, previous experiences in traditional public and/or private schools, and their motivations for entering homeschooling. For more direct questions, the researcher asked follow-up questions to probe for further details about their perceptions and experiences. Each participant had the option of creating a pseudonym to protect their identity, privacy, and anonymity. Pseudonym names were used when transcribing the interviews and throughout the data analysis process.

Student interviews were non-invasive, non-interruptive, and conversational-style (Leavy, 2015). Like teacher interviews, the interview approach with the students also displayed respect for the participants, the value of storytelling, and time orientation. Responses to the interviewee included semi-structured, follow-up questions and short utterances to show engagement, active listening to the participant, and the promotion of a familial relationship and rapport. Interviews were “narrative inducing” to promote storytelling in the exploration of the teachers’ homeschooling journey, philosophy on teaching, educational background, teaching experience, and instructional choices. Student interviews ranged from approximately 1 hour to 1.5 hours per student. Upon
completion of the student interviews, each audio recording was transcribed by the researcher to begin the coding and analysis process. During the data analysis, I scheduled one interview with Rose, a parent/guardian of a former BSA student during the 2019-2020 school year to contextualize a conflict between Quinn, a parent named Rose, and her child, a former student at BSA. I only interviewed Rose as she was the mother of the student who left the collective due to Quinn’s authoritarian teaching style. This phase was completed in November 2019.

**Phase V: Data Analysis and Triangulation**

**Conceptual and Theoretical Framework: Constructivist Grounded Theory.** This final phase consisted of analyzing and interpreting data based on: (a) written observation field notes, (b) transcribed audio recordings of classroom observations and interviews with research participants, and (c) a review of textual artifacts collected during this study. This data analysis and triangulation process draws upon constructivist grounded theory. The purpose of this theory is to examine the themes across the units of study that emerged from the data. The “compelling codes” that were generated led me to “crystallize” data to find the theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2014, p. 113-118).

Constructivist grounded theory is a theoretical framework to examine and determine the philosophical framework, underpinnings, cultural, curricular, instructional choices, and features of one Black homeschool collective from emerging themes and patterns in the data (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2009). This theory recognizes the researcher’s subjectivity as all research and researchers are naturally biased. This study draws upon Afrocentricity as a theoretical framework
to address the research questions that guide this dissertation. Afrocentricity was found in the emerging themes and patterns across the data in the examination of the philosophical framework, underpinnings, and features of BSA. This philosophy and theoretical framework self-identified and proclaimed by the current teacher was also seen during classroom observations. The following questions were explored throughout the data collection and analysis phases:

1. *Where are features of Afrocentricity found in the data?*
2. *To what extent are ideas and features of Afrocentricity identified by the current and former teachers and students at BSA?*

I examine data collected from six classroom observations and individual interviews on the experiences and perceptions of seven research participants at this homeschool collective. This conceptual framework investigates the philosophical underpinnings of teachers’ curricular and pedagogical choices, and the potential influence of these choices on the current students’ academic and racial and cultural identity development at BSA.

Transcribed classroom observations and interviews were triangulated, and coded and triangulated manually and through an online program called ATLAS.ti. This program helped to show the quantity or number of occurrences that a code or category reappeared. It also helped to double-check my manual coding process and generate codes and categories salient across all interviews and classroom observations. This was helpful in triangulating features of Afrocentric education expressed across the research participants and data points. I coded the most salient examples of Afrocentric education across data points and developed codes across the instructional methods, classroom conversations, assignments, and student and
teacher interactions. Thus, themes generated focus codes to help synthesize and analyze concepts that emerge in the transcribed interviews (Charmaz, 2014, Saldana, 2015). A close analysis of the themes at this homeschool collective was conducted, highlighting the events and learning facilitated through an investigation of the schedule, structure, rituals/traditions, expectations, curriculum, instruction, teacher-to-student, and student-to-student interactions and relationships at the homeschool collective.

During this phase, the types of “talk” were investigated and considered after individual interviews and classroom observations were conducted for triangulation purposes. There was a focus on individual teacher and student talk during individual interviews and classroom observations that explored: (a) information shared that was observed in the classroom, (b) information shared that was not observed in the classroom, and (c) information observed in the classroom that was not shared by research participants. “Talk” during interviews and observations are described synonymously as conversations or discussions.

Codes were used to identify the words and phrases spoken throughout the data points across research participants in an attempt to maintain the integrity of research participants’ perceptions and experiences at BSA. Collected textual artifacts included the collection of instructional materials such as curriculum-based content and student work samples that were examined for features of this homeschool collective’s philosophical and theoretical underpinnings resulting in codes and categories further examined per data point or unit of study.
To create these codes, I referred to my transcribed observational researcher notes and audio recordings of the six classroom observations. Based on salient themes that were found in the data pertaining to Afrocentricity, I selected and described the learning events and activities that were most connected to these themes in the classroom. These anecdotal or illustrative examples that were found during classroom learning events.

**Data Analysis and Findings**

In consideration of all data collected including interviews, classroom observations, memo notes, the analysis phase began. A thematic analysis approach was implemented to code, categorize, identify, and synthesize the patterns in the data for themes (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 2015). First, the themes in the data was interpreted from a holistic perspective. Afterwards, the themes in the data were reviewed and broken into simpler codes and categories that were compared and contrasted. However, it was not until after the synthesis of this data that it became apparent which of the collected data was useful to answering the research question in this study. Events or learning experiences, including content on race and culture, emerged from the data and took precedence in this investigation as findings discussed in Chapter 5.

**Objectivity**

This research study is constructivist as it considers the role of the researcher, participants, and social context of the research. According to Charmaz (2014), “Researchers who see themselves as objective social scientists or professionals often assume that their judgements of participants are correct. This
stance can lead to treating your unexamined assumptions as fact” (p. 159). The reality is that no one is free of objectivity. Charmaz (2014) explains “Shadows of capitalism, competition, and individualism may enter Western social scientists’ analyses without our realizing because they frame the way we the world” (p. 156).

It is crucial to recognize one’s objectivity and sensitivity throughout the process of coding the data. According to Charmaz (2014), “Becoming aware of your preconceptions as you engage in the iterative process of coding, memo-writing, and collecting data enriches your analysis” (p. 156). I engaged with students as a family member and researcher. As a participant researcher in this study, I consoled Isis with a hug and offered comforting words. At times, when students showed unmotivated behavior, I frequently reminded them that they were receiving an education that their friends in public and private schools were not and that they should be proud of that. These words of encouragement were an attempt to encourage the value of Afrocentric education and the environment of the homeschool collective. Thus, my role as a researcher extended beyond the requirements of this study as I was also a member of the Black community and an insider at BSA. I was not only a researcher at BSA. I was family.

Throughout this study, I recognized my subjective relationship to my dissertation, as both a researcher and participant in this study (Glesne, 2006). As a participant observer, I assumed these two roles to conduct the study, collect data, and complete a data analysis. Monitoring one’s subjectivity allows the researcher to be more conscious of the potential personal influence of research (Glesne, 2006). Furthermore, I tracked my reflexivity and thinking through reflective notes.
or memos in a journal that detailed my experiences as a researcher with multiple identities. I also used an audio recorder to track ideas about codes, categories, and data. Charmaz (2014) writes that, “Memos catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections you make, and crystallize questions and directions for you to pursue” (p. 162). I used memos to record my “path of theory construction” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 164).

**Teacher Interviews**

Upon completing teacher interviews, transcription, coding and categorization, separate meetings with the three teachers were scheduled to show them their transcripts for accuracy in their responses and to maintain the integrity of their voices. During this time, codes and categories that emerged from the data were also shared with the current and former teachers as an example of the data analysis and meaning making progress as well as the researchers thinking, reflection, analysis, and interpretation of the interviews. This information was shared with the teachers to maintain and sustain open communication, respect, and trust between the researcher and teachers. Codes and categories that emerged from the data that triangulated the teacher interviews include: *Issues with the U.S. public and private schools; The Role of the Teacher Who Sees Greatness in Students; Educate to Liberate; and Reprogram, Rebuild and Restore*.

During this phase, member checks were conducted throughout the data coding, analysis, and interpretation processes only with the current and former teachers to clarify and confirm the accuracy of their interview responses. Member checks have proven effective across research studies (Shockley et al., 2015) and
have aided in helping to build a strong rapport and relationship between the researcher and participants and proved successful in maintaining communication between them. I asked follow-up questions, as Holloway and Jefferson (2000) suggest, to gain better clarity of the research, perceptions, and experiences of participants, as well as my interpretation of data. This phase revealed a familial relationship in my role as a researcher at BSA and insider who established a kinship-based connection with research participants. My positionality supported the development of thick descriptions within data collected in this study to contextualize the presence of Afrocentric features, according to interviews and observations.

**Classroom Observations**

During classroom observations, there was a focus on the content that the current teacher taught, her teaching approach, the delivery of the content, and student responses to curriculum and instruction. A focus on critical conversations and the ways in which controversial or unlikely conversations were facilitated, scaffolded, and extended in the classroom among the teachers and students emerged from the data and were investigated.

This research examined general discourse in the classroom during observations. The cultural features and patterns of talk among teachers and students are explored at BSA. This talk revealed Afrocentricity in call-and-response, cultural affirmations, and subject matter. cultural lessons and values were taught throughout the school day and discussions were facilitated during classroom conversation and in responses (dialogue between teachers-to-students
and students-to-students) focusing on Black history, cultural pride, entrepreneurship, liberation, greatness, and independence to help uplift the Black community. Codes and categories that emerged from the classroom observations include: *Afrocentricity; Family or Village-centered; African-centered; Nurturing, Love, and Terms of Endearment; Home as the First School; African Features in an Integrated Curriculum; Rising Meeting; Conforming to an African-centered Way of Life; Teaching Same standards but African-centered.*

**Student Interviews**

Across the student interviews, data revealed that the students were exposed to a curriculum that privileged African history, culture, and identity in a way that contrasted from their previous public or private school. This was found in students’ resistance after they conformed to Afrocentric education at BSA.

Data collected from the informational packets by the students was used in conjunction with class observation field notes, individual interviews with research participants (teachers and students), and a collection of teacher and student materials (lesson plans, class assignments, homework assignments, etc.). A complete description of the recruitment materials and eligibility requirements to participate in this study are provided in the Appendix.

Based on student interviews, a description of each student was constructed in the form of a profile to further describe their educational background and homeschooling journey. The four students included Mia, Blair, Isis, and Wellington. While student profiles were acknowledged in chapter 5, there was a particular focus on the perceptions and experiences of two students-- Isis and
Wellington who were in attendance during all classroom observations. These two students provided a more in-depth analysis of students’ perceptions and experiences at BSA. Codes and categories that emerged from the data that triangulated the student interviews include: *Previous Issues with the U.S. public and private schools, rushed and time constrained in the U.S. public and private schools, disbelief and epiphany of Black contributions throughout history, homeschooling journey, and benefits of flexible schedule and cultural content, entrepreneurship and starting a business, and personal struggles brought into the classroom.*

**Triangulation.** Triangulation of data from interviews, classroom observations, and a review of textual artifacts revealed codes, categories, and focus codes for a thematic analysis approach (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 2015). During the triangulation process, patterns in the codes and categories emerged across the data points or units of study that consisted of classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student interviews.

Based on the analysis, the most salient classroom events or activities in the homeschool collective’s schedule, content, traditions, class lessons, student assignments, and class discussion. The themes that emerged from the data through focus codes included Afrocentricity, familial relationships, an authoritarian teaching style, an authoritative teaching style, *Our Story,* and Black independence. This phase completed in October 2021. An Afrocentric theoretical framework was found in the curricular choices and instructional practices at this homeschool collective.
**Textual Artifacts.** Following the data coding process, an analysis of textual artifacts was conducted. This analysis led to the investigation of emerging patterns, themes, and categories across various curricular and instructional materials, including teacher materials, such as books, and content on the collective’s website. An analysis of textual artifacts was conducted to review the language used to describe BSA as a Black homeschool collective on its official website and examine student assignments at BSA. The following questions were used to explore emergent patterns in the research:

1. What teaching styles were found at BSA?
2. What features of Afrocentricity were found in the teaching styles of teachers?

Textual artifacts were used in addition to classroom observations and interviews. Artifacts consisted of photos and field notes taken by the researcher during classroom observations. This study considered the resources and materials that the teacher either created originally on her own, as well as pre-existing materials that were modified and adapted by the teacher. Original or adapted documents were comprised of the integrated curriculum at BSA. These documents consisted of instructional materials (books/literature, handouts, online resources) and student assignments (work samples across content areas). Documents collected, and online resources used for instructional purposes at BSA were analyzed and triangulated across data points (observations and interviews/conversations) for its connection to the functionality of BSA. During classroom observations, this examination revealed the types of conversations
between teacher and the researcher, teacher and students, the students and their peers, and students to the researcher.

**Limitations of the Study**

I appeared as a researcher at BSA briefly in 2017 and for this research study in 2019. While I hoped to have an in-depth version of an Afrocentric homeschool collective, data collected for this dissertation was limited. The evidence was limited due to the shifts and changes in the schedule and the short time I observed BSA. BSA continuously underwent changes that led to inconsistencies as an Afrocentric homeschool collective. Due to financial and philosophical inconsistencies at BSA that caused the homeschool collective to relocate several times and decline in teachers and students, this dissertation contains missing data as I was not present throughout the establishment and development of this homeschool collective. I have an incomplete picture of what went on due to less evidence of what the teachers did at BSA outside of teacher interviews. As a result, I am operating with limited information, as every time I arrived at BSA, the iteration of the homeschool collective changed. I have a snapshot and not the whole picture of the homeschool collective, which is a limitation of this research. I have not gotten a full scope of this Afrocentric homeschool collective.

Limited research exists on Black homeschools, especially Afrocentric homeschool collectives. There is also not enough evidence to prove that the features of Afrocentricity present at BSA inform and guide students on a long-term basis, beyond the limited time I conducted this study. This research is not a longitudinal study conducted over a lengthy period. Observations include six
classroom observations as supplemental to teacher and student interviews. The majority of what I know about the Afrocentric features present at this homeschool collective is second-hand from the teacher’s interpretations of what happened during teacher interviews. Future studies are needed to investigate the impact of Afrocentric education as providing culturally responsive best practices to students, focusing on Black history and culture, at Black homeschools—individual and collective—as best practices in any educational setting.

Conclusion

The five phases and data points provide mini-narratives of BSA teachers and students as it relates to their perceptions and experiences. Data revealed the salient features of Afrocentric education across the interviews, classroom observations, and textual artifacts at BSA. After comparing BSA when it transformed into a Black Panther School and returned to its original model as an Afrocentric homeschool collective, components of Afrocentricity, consisting of familial relationships, were present, including an African time orientation, a personalized learning plan, OurStory, and Rising Meeting. Afrocentric teachers at BSA employed familial relationships across two iterations of this homeschool collective. This study further illuminates and compliments the larger emerging, evolving narrative of Black homeschools across the U.S.
CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE EVOLUTION AND TRANSFORMATION OF BSA INTO A BLACK PANTHER SCHOOL

*Education remains one of the black community’s most enduring values. It is sustained by the belief that freedom and education go hand in hand, that learning and training are essential to economic quality and independence.*

—Marian Wright Edelman

**Tracing the History and Evolution of BSA**

This chapter traces the history and evolution of BSA across multiple years within three periods, including pre-BSA formation, BSA formation, and post-BSA formation when this homeschool collective transformed into a Black Panther School. Data is comprised of individual teacher interviews: two with Yala as the current teacher, one with Daniece as a former teacher, and three with Quinn as a former teacher. Afrocentric and Black nationalist features emerged through each teacher’s influence on the philosophy and instructional strategies—authoritarian and authoritative instructional practices—present at this homeschool collective.

Phase one, or pre-BSA formation, consists of the events that occurred in Yala’s life as a public, private, and a homeschool teacher across various settings from 2006-2012. Phase two, or BSA formation, encompasses the events that transpired when Yala created an Afrocentric homeschool collective from 2013 to 2017. Phase three, post-BSA formation, includes the events that happened from 2017 to 2019. During this phase, BSA transformed into a Black Panther School.
The current context of BSA post-BSA formation, provided in chapter five, documents the time period when I arrived at the homeschool collective as a researcher during the 2019-2020 school year. This phase, spanning from July 2019 to November 2019, after BSA returned to its original Afrocentric model, consists of six full days of classroom observations and interviews with Yala as the current teacher and founder, two former teachers, and current students. Figure 1 comprises a chronological timeline of the historical narrative of the three phases illuminating the creation and development of BSA. The first phase is explored in the following subsection.
The Creation of BSA

- Yala becomes a public school teacher
- Yala teaches a lesson that motivates her to become an Afriocentric and change her name
- Yala adopts an Afriocentric identity and changes her name
- Yala's Afriocentric identity influences her teaching
- Philosophical issues emerge
- Yala

2006
Pre-BSA Formation Phase 2006-2012

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

Post-BSA Formation Phase 2017-2019

The Arrival of the Researcher at BSA

Summer 2017 was my 1st visit to BSA and interview with Yala.

Summer 2019, I return to BSA to conduct a formal study during the 2019-2020 school year.

Yala, Quinn, and Danciece are individually interviewed.

This research study begins with teacher and student interviews, classroom observations, and textual artifacts.

Note: This timeline separates into chronological years to acknowledge the details prior to and during the creation of BSA, as well as my presence as the researcher. Although listed in individual years, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 constitute two school years. Years 2014 and 2015 are listed in this timeline with the same description as there was no substantial evidence from teacher interviews on these formative school years when BSA was in its infancy.
Pre-BSA Formation Phase

Based on my analysis of the teacher interviews, this phase spanned from 2006 to 2012. Yala’s cultural and philosophical identity at this Afrocentric homeschool collective places her at the center of the analysis. Yala encountered complications as a public, private, and live-in homeschool teacher that ultimately, influenced her to establish an Afrocentric homeschool collective. At the time of Yala’s interview in 2019, she had over 15 years of teaching experience (public, private, and homeschool).

Identifying as an Afrocentrist

By 2006, Yala graduated with a degree in education and pursued a career as a public-school teacher. Yala’s Afrocentric identity and changing ideologies were the result of personal and family struggles related to new bourgeoning knowledge of her African heritage, role as a Black mother, and position as a Black teacher. These personal and family struggles guided her curricular choices and instructional practices and shaped her decision to start a Black homeschool collective.

Several events occurred in Yala’s life that impacted the construction of her Black identity. These events are depicted in Figure 1. According to an interview, Yala’s Afrocentric identity evolved from learning new information about her African history and culture. This identity that triggered Yala to reflect on her role and methods as a teacher, influenced her teaching style across several schools.

As shown in the timeline, Yala discovered the history of the Moors—Black Muslim inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula—while planning to teach a
unit on European exploration. While planning to teach this lesson, Yala learned more about the Moors and acquired new knowledge about her African history that impacted the development of her Black identity. The process of learning more about the Moors before teaching the lesson, was a springboard that led Yala to further explore and discover new information that influenced how she saw herself as a person of African heritage. This history lesson about the Moors was one of the earliest events of her reidentifying process, acquiring newfound knowledge about her African history and heritage.

When Yala taught this lesson, she didn’t expect that it would influence her identity. However, Yala described during an interview that this “awakening” prompted her to identify as an Afrocentrist and legally change her “slave,” American, or name given at birth, to an African name. While preparing the lesson was the first event leading to her transformation as an Afrocentrist, it is unclear if she recognized other experiences as impactful to the development of her Afrocentric identity as she did not explicitly discuss other changes during her interview. According to Yala, “That name change lets people know that you’ve changed. I’m not the same person I was” (Yala, personal communication, September 5, 2019). The lesson that she said she taught influenced Yala to reidentify herself to reclaim her Black identity. She changed her name as the first stage to self-identify as an Afrocentrist. Yala’s name change is consistent with the historical references of the desire for Black people to change their name from, for example, a European to an African name. Many Black people who consider
themselves an Afrocentrist often take on this name to reidentify and reclaim their African heritage (Onaci, 2016).

Historically, many Black people have changed their names for various reasons that are based on the history of slavery, religious purposes, or a reconnection to one’s African heritage. Since the antebellum era, many Black persons have changed their names to distance themselves from the history of slavery by rejecting the name or identity that their enslaver gave them, and their former status as slaves, or historical connection to slavery. Some Black people changed their names to re-identify themselves as newly emancipated persons to prevent from passing the name of their former slavemaster through their family.

Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass’ (Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey) book, Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave (1845), is an example of this renaming as a method of protection to avoid recapture after successfully escaping slavery. Douglass kept his first name but changed his surname to Johnson due to its popularity. Later, Frederick changed his surname to Douglass, inspired by the name of an exiled nobleman in the poem, The Lady of the Lake, by Sir Walter Scott. His name change was meant to help detach himself from his slave master. Some Black people rejected their slave names by changing their names to a common English-sounding name, a different European name, or by choosing a name that reflected African-influenced identities. They changed their slave name to a new name to dissociate themselves from the conditions and history of slavery. This name change is designed to reject
White American culture. Like many Black people throughout history who changed their name for these reasons, Yala, the homeschool teacher at BSA, also changed her name to re-identify herself as a Black woman and teacher. However, there are other instances during which many Black people have changed their names.

Second, some Black people changed their name for religious purposes to reject conformity to a particular religion. Due to the Muslim faith, many Black people have changed their birth names and adopted Muslim names. A few of these persons, include Black Nationalist El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X or Malcolm Little), World Heavyweight boxer and humanitarian Muhammad Ali (Cassius Clay), and NBA player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (Ferdinand Lewis Alcindor, Jr.).

Third, some Black people changed their names to identify specifically as Afrocentrists. During the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, there was a shift in how Black people named, defined, and identified themselves to express a Black culture distinct from and independent of White culture, especially in rejection of the painful history of slavery in America (Chawane, 2016; Cook et al., 2014; Fryer & Levitt, 2004; Paustian, 1978). Black Scholar, Molefi Kete Asante (Arthur Lee Smith, Jr) who coined the term Afrocentricity, changed his name to reflect a new Black identity after a visit to several countries in Africa in 1972. After visiting Ghana, a librarian erroneously thought that an Englishman authored Asante's books due to his English legal name. This led Asante to legally change his name in 1973 (Turner & Asante, 2002). Changing one’s name is not a
requirement of Afrocentrists, but one of the many ways to reidentify oneself. It is a common practice among self-proclaimed Afrocentrists that reflects self-worth and cultural pride. The redefining or naming of oneself speaks to one of the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa, kujichagulia, or self-determination which means, “to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves” (Karenga, 1966, 1989, Karenga, 2018). This name change reflects an appreciation of and quest for one’s African history, culture, lineage, identity, ancestry, and roots. This reclamation of African identity through a name change reflects the Kwanzaa principle, Kujichagulia or self-determination, defined as, “To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves” (Karenga, 2018).

**Enacting Afrocentricity in a Public School**

According to an analysis of Yala’s interview, her Afrocentric identity was enacted in the way that she viewed and identified herself. For example, she changed her name to redefine herself as Afrocentric. One way that Yala discussed her role as an Afrocentrist when she described her instructional practices—a familial teaching style as a public-school teacher that contrasted with her colleagues’ teaching style. For example, during interviews, Yala referred to her students as “babies.” She also used the phrase “our kids” when describing her students. This familial reference reveals her parental responsibility to her students. This reference is connected to extended kin and family due to the connection between gender and familial roles and responsibilities.
However, according to an interview with Yala, many of her White colleagues did not share the same cultural understanding and value of the importance of a familial relationship through teachers’ communication with students in the classroom. Yala’s White colleagues corrected her familial reference to students who they referred to as “the districts babies” (Yala, personal communication, September 6, 2019). This reference reveals a cultural disconnect between Yala and her colleague’s relationship with students.

Yala expressed during an interview the importance of using her teaching approach to build a familial relationship with her students. However, Yala’s teaching approach was culturally misunderstood by a predominately White teaching staff and administration. According to Morgan (2010), cultural misunderstandings are common between Black and White teachers and administrators especially at a predominately White school. This was evident when Yala addressed a student’s misbehavior. Yala explained, “‘Imma call your mama and ask her if I can whoop your butt if you don’t sit down and do your work’” (Yala, personal communication, September 6, 2019). Yala said that she did not intend to literally “whoop” the student. Yala’s response to this student illuminates her cultural ways of interacting with Black students and the relationship that she has with the student and mother. Yala noted that she had the authority or permission to discipline the student in that culturally familial way that was approved by the parent to reinforce positive behavior and high expectations to complete work or the student would be disciplined. Yala was eventually
reprimanded for her teaching style which led to her resignation as a public-school teacher. She explained:

It’s a cultural thing. They blew it out of proportion. That [reprimand] wasn’t even called for. I can’t change my teaching style who I am—talk like a white woman. No! ‘Girl, you better go sit down somewhere.’ Come on now! That’s what’s wrong with the students now. They think they can do whatever. (Yala, personal communication, September 6, 2019)

Yala’s Afrocentric identity and teaching style led to her Black cultural ways of interacting with students who she had high expectations for. However, Yala’s teaching style was not culturally acceptable by her White colleagues. She chose not to confirm to White cultural ways of teaching to address her student’s issue. Morgan (2010) explained that, “Teachers who thoroughly understand the cultures and communication styles of the groups mentioned are more likely to prevent such misunderstandings from worsening” (p. 115). This cultural misunderstanding could have been prevented had the school administrators sought to understand Yala’s teaching style.

Historically, many Black teachers have consistently created an education centered on Black history and culture, encouraging Black students to learn and celebrate their history and culture, combat racism, and build agency, self-determination, and independence (Anderson, 1988; Buchart, 1980; Irvine and Irvine, 1983; Lee, 2005; Lomotey, 2010; Lomotey & Brookins, 1988; Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987). Since the establishment of early independent Black schools, one of the main objectives of Black teachers is to develop a familial relationship and rapport with students (Williams, 2005; Williams, 2017).

**Identifying as a Black Teacher in a Private School**
During the first phase presented in this timeline, in 2012, Yala resigned as a public-school teacher to become a private school teacher. The school had a predominately White student population and teaching staff and administration. This is where Yala faced yet another conflict, overt racism and discrimination.

Yala, the only Black or what she refers to as a “melanated” teacher and tutor at the private school, developed personalized student lesson plans. During an interview, Yala said that she was “insulted” by a White parent of one of her students who was removed from her roster because the parent wanted her child to have a “White tutor.” This was an incident of racial discrimination. Yala explained:

One of the more affluent parents, she was White. She didn’t want me to tutor her child because I was Black… They told me, ‘She wants a white tutor for her daughter.’ She didn’t want her tutor to be a black woman…” My administrators, instead of having my back… they moved her [student] to another teacher with no teaching experience… I was insulted. I was like, You know what? This is not 1954. No. I’m not fighting racism. I’m not doin’ it. (Yala, personal communication, May 17, 2017)

In this quote, Yala described a personal encounter with racism and discrimination as a private school teacher. During the other two teacher interviews, racism was revealed as one of the main factors that led to contention while teaching at this private school. Yala’s Black racial identity was a point of contention that led an unreported racist incident. This incident led Yala to question her sense of belonging, self-worth, and credibility as a teacher. Eventually, she resigned from the private school.

Following her resignation in 2012, a parent of a former student from the private school contacted and requested Yala as a live-in homeschool teacher. It
was during this experience working as a homeschool teacher that her interest in homeschooling grew, especially as a viable educational option for Black students. By 2016, Yala resigned from the live-in homeschool teacher position to pursue her educational business full-time that evolved into Black Scholars Academy (BSA), an Afrocentric homeschool collective.

**BSA Formation Phase**

Yala established BSA to provide educational services to Black families under an Afrocentric philosophy, influenced by her Afrocentric identity that places Black history and culture at the center of curriculum and instruction. This phase, encompassing the formation of BSA, spans from 2013 to 2017.

As described in the *Pre-BSA Formation phase*, Yala’s discussion of her teaching experiences as a public and private school teacher reveal that Yala’s identity as a Black and Afrocentric teacher who exercised Black cultural ways of interacting, were culturally misunderstood by her White colleagues and student’s parents leading to philosophical conflicts that later led to changes at this homeschool collective. One example of a lesson is based on Yala’s discovery of the Moors. Yala’s identity as a Black teacher was a point of contention when she became a victim of racism discrimination by a White parent of a student, an issue that was never dealt with, addressed, or resolved by the school. These experiences and factors led Yala to resign as a public and private school teacher and create BSA, an Afrocentric homeschool collective. In the discussion of a homeschool collective, it is essential to understand its structure. A homeschool collective or cooperative (co-op) operates similarly to a traditional school with multiple
students from various households in the same group or family-oriented setting who are taught by a teacher, a parent/guardian, or hired professional. For example, while Carol D. Lee’s charter school is identified as Afrocentric but operates like a traditional school, it focuses on familial involvement. Yala also promotes a familial culture at BSA. Betty Shabazz International Charter School, founded in 1998, began as a free Afrocentric school in Chicago, Illinois. This was during the time when charter schools were being organized across the state. Operating first as an elementary school, it evolved to later serve high school students. This school consists of three campuses, including Betty Shabazz International Charter School, DuSable Leadership Academy of Betty Shabazz International Charter School, and Barbara A. Sizemore Academy of Betty Shabazz International on the Southside of Chicago (Finkel, 2006). Although the school began as a free Afrocentric school, the curriculum is more reflective of a traditional curriculum adhering to national core content standards, and a focus on various forms of art. However, certain Afrocentric traditions are practiced, including the use of an African dashiki as the school uniform and ritualistic drumming practices during their Morning Meeting.

By the time I arrived at this homeschool as a researcher, BSA was in operation for four years. In the Summer of 2017, I first visited BSA for a Qualitative Research course in anticipation of a formal study. During this visit, I learned about Yala’s background as a teacher and the purpose of BSA during a conversational-style interview with her, a parent, and a student. Shortly after this
visit, I scheduled one full day of a classroom observation to complete my course assignment. An excerpt from my field notes at the time of this visit is as follows:

The aroma of burning incense seeped from under the front door of BSA, where I waited to enter. The faint sound of an infant crying and a woman’s voice grew from behind the door. Within a matter of seconds, the door opened, and I was greeted warmly with a smile and hug by Yala, a Black teacher of a homeschool collective. (Wells, Field Notes, May 2017)

This visit, informal interview, and classroom observation are the genesis of my doctoral dissertation. As highlighted in the timeline mentioned, the story of BSA started before I met and interviewed Yala. When I met her in 2017, Yala had operated BSA, an Afrocentric homeschool collective for four years as the only teacher with 13 students. After I completed my course assignment, I did not have any additional engagement with BSA until the summer of 2019. This Afrocentric homeschool collective continued to evolve with new teachers who influenced the development of BSA, as examined in the following phase.

**Post-BSA Formation Phase**

The post-BSA formation phase was described in teacher interviews as the period when Yala hired two new teachers who influenced the homeschool collective to evolve into a Black Panther School from 2017 to 2019. According to teacher interviews, during the Fall of 2017 (2017-2018 school year), the student population fluctuated between 13 and 20 students. The following school year had a total student population of 20 students, consisting of 17 males and three females—all of whom including teachers identified as Black or African-American. Due to an increase in the student population and need for new teachers,
Yala, who was overwhelmed by the influx of students, hired two new teachers, Quinn and Daniece, in the Fall of 2017, which is the focus of this chapter.

While a formal interview process and a degree in education are typical hiring requirements of public and private school teachers, BSA teachers were not required to undergo a formal interview process or have a teaching degree. Prospective teachers were qualified to teach at BSA if they fell into any of the following four categories, including racially identifying as a Black person, affiliating with Black community members of high moral standing and character, knowledge of Black history, expertise in an academic discipline, or teaching experience. Quinn, a former teacher at BSA, was recommended to Yala as a potential martial arts teacher. A well-known African-American man and grandmaster in martial arts in the local community referred him to Yala. Quinn was hired using this process. However, this hiring method was deemed ineffective and abandoned. Daniece, a college-educated African-American woman was hired for her knowledge of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and Kemetic Science. These qualifications combined with her experience as a mother, qualified her to teach at this homeschool collective. Daniece was not hired by recommendation. Instead, she was hired as someone who Daniece knew and eventually became friends with. According to an interview with Daniece:

I have taught all my babies... I’ve always been a teacher. And I feel like teachers are not very hard to create, especially when they’re mothers. So, the very first people that I taught were my children. (Daniece, personal communication, August 21, 2019)

Daniece’s identity as a parent and professional in a field of study, qualified her to teach at BSA.
Transforming into a Black Panther School

During this phase, I was not present as a researcher and did not arrive back at BSA until Summer 2019 for a formal research study conducted in the next chapter. Information analyzed derived from teacher interviews reveal that BSA teachers affiliated with the Louisville chapter of the Revolutionary Black Panther Party (RBPP) that transformed this homeschool collective into a Black Panther School. Two new influential teachers, Quinn and Daniece, brought their politics and philosophies to BSA during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. During this phase, the RBPP became BSA’s primary fiscal sponsor and BSA teachers served leadership roles in the organization after becoming concerned with the need for racial protection against violence in the Black community. According to Yala, BSA and the Black Panther Party shared the same “philosophies on liberation” (Yala, personal communication, September 6, 2019). Daniece was the General. Quinn was the Minister of Defense and Information. Yala was the Minister of Education. During this phase, data analyzed from teacher interviews reveal the presence of familial relationships, consisting of an African time orientation, personal learning plans, the teaching of OurStory, and the practice of Rising Meeting, as a feature of Afrocentricity at BSA. However, during this phase, one instructional approach—an authoritarian instructional approach— led to some issues between a teacher, student, and their family.

Familial Relationships. Familial relationships, including an authoritative and authoritarian teaching style, are both features of Afrocentricity present in teacher interviews in discussion of homeschool collective as a Black Panther
School. According to interviews, teachers expressed that familial relationships are realized at BSA through the personal connections and kinship bonds that are developed between the teachers, students, and their parents. BSA teachers talked about their interactions with students, during which they used kinship terms and family-oriented behaviors to establish a healthy relationship and rapport with students, representing an extended family.

Familial and kinship connection is nurturing, supportive, and reflective of the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa including, *ujamaa*. Ujamaa— defined at its traditional African origin in Swahili as “familyhood,” “extended family,” or as a family-oriented principle— is a social and economic policy implemented by President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (Fouéré, 2014). The concept of *ubuntu*, which is the understanding that a person develops through the influence of the community as they shared the same belief in this paraphrased African proverb (Tutu, 2013), was understood by all three teachers who described their interactions with students as familial through their use of kinship terms, for example.

As the African proverb goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Daniece described the familial relationships at BSA that speak to the absence of family-oriented practices, including home visits in schools. Daniece explained, “There was a time period when you could do home visits. There was a time period when you can call the parents on the weekend ‘hey is everything alright?’…That’s a part of a village principle of ours” (Daniece, personal communication, August 21, 2019).
Another aspect of embracing a village mentality is prevalent in the gender roles of BSA teachers. BSA teachers adopted societally “traditional” or normative roles. For example, the women teachers identified as nurturing mothers or aunts. The male teacher identified as a disciplinarian, father, and coach. Traditional gender and parental norms manifested in the teachers' roles, positions, and responsibilities as they developed familial relationships with students at BSA. The homeschool collective was viewed as another home and the teachers were viewed as parents or parental figures to students. During an interview, Quinn explained that students are, “leaving home and coming into another home.” This is evident when Quinn further explained, “You literally put them in another house” (Quinn, personal communication, August 21, 2019). Daniece described the familial relationship between BSA teachers, students, and their families at BSA when she said, “We’re a big ol’ family... It’s like literally... a real village. It looks like we all live on the same block [laughter].” Quinn agreed when he said:

The atmosphere— I think that's probably one of the most [important] things as far as educating to liberate. It's Afrocentric. It's not—what's the word—industrialized the way education is right now. It's more organic. It's more of a home feel. Yeah. It's homeschool. Yeah. (Quinn, personal communication, August 21, 2019)

BSA symbolizes a home and a family for students, according to teachers.

Based on the gendered expectations of teacher roles, the women teachers were described as nurturing or authoritative. The male teacher was described as stricter or authoritarian with harsher disciplinarian practices with students. These two different perceptions of gendered roles in educating and raising children were present at this homeschool collective. According to interviews, gendered roles and
heteronormative expectations prevalent across various institutions were also present at this homeschool collective.

During the Post-BSA formation stage, in August 2017, when BSA became affiliated with the RBPP and evolved into a Black Panther School, the familial relationship model enacted in BSA are realized in how the teachers (pseudo parents of the students). Familial relationship is realized in BSA just like it’s realized in the Black family. Familial relationship at this homeschool collective parallels with Black family parenting styles. A crucial feature of how Black teachers instruct is either through an authoritative mode or authoritarian mode (both of which are realized through the gender roles of BSA’s teachers). However, since BSA’s practices are informed by Black Panther tradition, which promotes discipline, the authoritarian style is more utilized as a mode of instructing the students and/or correcting behaviors. While this is an observation from interviews, a discussion of gendered norms is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

At BSA, familial relationship is connected to traditional gender roles and responsibilities which are common among Black teachers (Irvine, 1989, 2002; Lee, 2005). BSA teachers take on the role of surrogate parent, caregiver, teacher, and counselor as found in literature on Black teachers (Littlejohn-Blake & Darling, 1993). Based on interviews, parental roles are reinforced by kinship terms and language used to describe the relationship among teachers and students at this homeschool collective. Parental roles are designed to make the homeschool collective feel like a home and family to students. The women teachers, Yala and
Daniece, described themselves as parental figures to students. During interviews, Yala describes herself in the classroom as a:

Momma. Counselor. Principal. Dean… my primary role is-- the momma’s the first teacher… A child of one is a child of all-- that’s an African proverb. So, I look at them as my children. (Yala, Interview, September 6, 2019)

Daniece agreed when she explained, “My role is… like a Momma… The best love that you can get is from your mother” (Daniece, personal communication, August 21, 2019). As described across teacher interviews, Yala and Daniece are “mothers” and “nurturers.” Quinn, the male teacher agreed when he explained, “Yala's the mama… You got an Auntie Daniece here” (Quinn, personal communication, August 21, 2019). Quinn further explained, “Yala will say she's the mom… She's very much the nurturer” (Quinn, personal communication, August 21, 2019).

Parental roles explored teachers' descriptions of their responsibilities and interactions with students at this homeschool collective. During interviews, Yala and Daniece discussed the use of kinship terms, hugs, cultural affirmations, and high expectations as parental figures in their interaction with students at BSA. BSA teachers referred to students as their “children” and family.” Daniece explained, “It’s more like my brother and my sister and my cousin and my aunt. And so, it’s very family-centered” (Daniece, personal communication, August 21, 2019).

A familial relationship among students was also encouraged through the reference of students as siblings. According to BSA teachers, some students used terms of endearment to address their peers as “play cousins” and women teachers
as “aunties” (Foster, 1994; Guttman, 1976; Jones, 1985). Quinn further explained, “We're all brothers and sisters in here. We look out for each other… We're family… The kids come in. They call each other brothers and sisters” (Quinn, personal communication, August 21, 2019). Quinn described another occasion when a student slept in class. In another example of his authoritative instructional approach, Quinn used encouraging words to motivate students to understand their responsibility in the attainment of an education and the importance of encouraging the people around them. His goal was to help build a supportive community between the students. Quinn paraphrased a previous motivational lesson that she shared with students:

We’re only as strong as our weakest link. When your brothers are telling you, ‘Brother, you need to get this homework in. You need to do this. Come on. Don’t sleep in class. Wake up. Here comes Quinn, bro.’ They’re trying to look out for you. (Quinn, personal communication, August 21, 2019).

While familial roles and kinship terms of endearment were used during interviews providing evidence of a familial relationship between the teacher and students, it is unknown of whether or not this approach was effective in the classroom as classroom observations and interviews of students during that time were not conducted.

Quinn, the key figure in this Black Panther tradition as a “father” figure and disciplinarian, leads to his teaching style that reflected an authoritarian instructional approach. His teaching identity was influenced by his role as a Black nationalist, member of the Revolutionary Black Panther Party, and martial arts instructor. Quinn was hired specifically to accomplish a particular parental role as a “father” figure and an authoritarian teacher to reinforce gender-based family
roles that were designed to nurture but discipline students. During interviews, Quinn described himself as a “dad, big brother, mentor, and confidant… all in one, best friend” to his students (Quinn, personal communication, August 21, 2019). This role implies that Quinn viewed himself as a family member who was responsible for teaching students with a focus on discipline that connects familial relationship and an authoritarian instructional approach. His Black Panther-informed instructional approach was described by teachers during interviews as a stricter teacher while teaching math and martial arts. This militancy was used to describe Quinn’s authoritarian teaching style. His approach was harsher than Yala and Daniece, two women, contrasting from their authoritative teaching style as a “mother” and “auntie” figure.

During interviews, BSA teacher described various classroom learning events when Quinn’s authoritarian instructional approach was used to reinforce expectations and discipline. He was stricter than the other two teachers and exerted a more authoritarian teaching style to promote positive behavior, high expectations, and life skills among students. For example, when students display a lack of motivation work ethic, determination, and resilience, Quinn tasked them to recite a memorized poem titled Excuses (Peralta, 2013). This well-known poem is often recited within Black organizations including fraternities and sororities. This poem reminds students to produce a high quality of work by reinforcing positive expectations. Quinn described a time when he instructed students to recite the poem aloud, on cue, and in a call-and-response format as a method of behavioral redirection when a student had an excuse or reason for poor performance in class:
Excuses are tools of incompetence. Built upon monuments of nothing. Those who specialize in them seldom become great in anything. We don't make excuses. We get results. How do we get results? We get results through focus—following one course into success—Focus. (Quinn, personal communication, August 21, 2019)

The recitation of memorized poems including *Excuses* aimed to encourage students to take accountability for their decisions and actions. Like a sports coach, Quinn taught lessons on endurance, fortitude, and success. He explained:

> It's like a coach's love when you're on the football field. When you do something good, that coach's gonna slap you on the back. ‘Good job.’ When you're little, that should hurt, but he's also making you tough when he does that… It's a pushing. You know that coach would never hurt you. You never come home thinking—fearing for your life like, he might just kill me…That's what I put in the kids. That's what I mean when I say, I might have to beat you up. It might not even be physically. It might just be emotionally. Let me get in your head real quick… Let me tell you what you are right now—you know what I'm saying—from my eyes…I probably made you cry but understand what I do it for. …That's what I mean by beat up. It's not always physically. It's like, I'm gonna give you what you need, and I'm not gonna spare your feelings for it because when you get in the real world, nobody's gonna spare your feelings, and if you fuck up, it might not just be me slapping you on the back. It might be your life that's on the line… I feel like you're getting off easy with me slapping you [or] punching you in the chest. (Quinn, personal communication, August 21, 2019).

Quinn was trying to encourage students to develop their confidence and stand their ground as a method of racial protectionism. During interviews, Quinn described how he talked to students, what he taught, and the type of tone that he used during the delivery of motivational messages and lessons. Quinn’s words and message were more similar to the motivation of a sports coach, or better yet, a drill sergeant in the military. Quinn’s message reflected an authoritarian style of teaching that he described as present particularly when student’s underperformed in the classroom and there was a need for discipline. Quinn’s lessons aimed to instill in his students, grit and determination to accomplish educational goals.
Foster (1994) explained that, “Teachers of similar background will sometimes judge students more harshly because they remind them of their younger selves” (p. 229). Quinn used exercise drills, karate, and pep-talks to manage behavior in the classroom and to prevent issues from emerging outside of the classroom.

Quinn described another teaching experience when he attempted to shift his student’s negative mindset to focus on his abilities rather than his disabilities. Quinn recounted his talk with a student when he said:

‘Don't nobody got asthma.’ At first, I'm the big bad— ‘He's so mean. He won't even let me do my inhaler.’ I'm changing your core. I'm rewiring your brain... Can't nobody beat you but you. We are our own worst enemy. If you tell yourself you can't do it, then that's what your self's gonna hear. (Quinn, personal communication, August 15, 2019)

Quinn’s authoritarian teaching approach focused on his students’ abilities but was harsher than the authoritative teacher’s approach. He said, “I don't allow any of my kids to be guided or piloted by a disability. It's okay to have it, but we're not gonna be piloted by it.” Quinn aimed to help build his students’ character and challenge them to persist despite struggles. However, conflict emerged in the way that he taught students.

Although Yala supported and advocated for Quinn’s authoritarian teaching style, there were conflicting educational philosophies among Quinn, a few students, and their families. Quinn’s authoritarian instructional approach to disciplinarian actions towards students that reflected the philosophy of Black Panther tradition led to issues concerning violence. According to teacher interviews, a couple of parents removed their children from the homeschool collective. Authoritarianism led to conflict, dissatisfaction, and a decreased
student population. An authoritarian instructional approach is the least effective teaching style as it does not lead to fewer behavior problems among students (Querido et al., 2002).

Conflict emerged between one student and their parent after Quinn kicked the back of the desk that the student was sleeping in. Quinn's harsh teaching approach contrasted to Yala and Daniece. According to teacher interviews, while Yala taught a lesson, a student slept in her class. Yala summoned Quinn in the room to reinforce positive behavior. Quinn recounted the incident. He explained that he used martial art movement when he kicked his leg back, striking the desk of a student to get his attention. He explained, “I walk in there. He's got his head on the [table]… I walked over there… turned around and back-kicked it [the table]” (Quinn, personal communication, August 21, 2019). The student relayed the incident to his mother who removed him from BSA. Rose, the student’s mother, did not agree with anyone being mean or stricter than she would be with her child. This reveals that she, as a parent, was not fond or supportive of an authoritarian teaching style because it was not reflective of her parenting style. According to Rose:

There’s a difference with empowering kids and teaching them martial arts or hurting them physically, emotionally, socially, while teaching them martial arts… Their teaching methods and style were not for me. (Rose, personal communication, May 16, 2020)

This conflict suggests that the authoritarian instructional approach is ineffective in reinforcing positive behaviors among students. Despite this conflict, an interview with Rose and Quinn revealed that students still liked Quinn on a personal or character level. Even after the students left the homeschool collective, a familial
relationship persisted between the student and Quinn. Rose explained, “The kids still love Quinn even when they see him. We are all interconnected, and we are in the community together.” However, even though the students eventually liked Quinn after this incident, it was still an ineffective teaching method.

Foster (1994) writes, “When effective Black teachers take on the role of kin, they embrace a complex set of behaviors that demand appropriate doses of firmness and nurturance” (p. 232). Research proves that family structure, family income, and the function of the family are impactful, particularly to the self-esteem of Black children (Mandara and Murray, 2000). Gender roles in families have positive implications for children. For example, Black fathers were found more influential in the lives of their sons in helping boys to secure a stable identity and self-esteem. While the role of the male figure is important to the development particularly of young men, Quinn’s presence as a father figure and disciplinarian had the opposite outcome, leading into conflict due to a difference in the students’ mother’s parenting skills contrasting from an authoritarian parenting approach. Ferguson (2005) classifies what I refer to as an authoritarian teaching style as the least effective style in parenting or teaching children.

According to an interview with Yala, her original vision of BSA as an Afrocentric homeschool collective was not as militant as Quinn’s at this Black Panther School. This conflict decreased her student population, led to financial strain, and a potential negative reputation on the homeschool. In an effort to protect the original reputation of the homeschool collective and prevent any negative views of BSA, Yala abandoned the collective’s direct affiliation with the
RBPP, chose not to rehire Quinn and Daniece, transformed BSA back to its original Afrocentric model. After Yala returned BSA to its original Afrocentric tradition and didn’t rehire the two former teachers, the authoritarian instructional approach that Quinn previously enacted was no longer present as described next in chapter 5. Despite the problems that emerged from an authoritarian instructional approach, the authoritative instructional approach helped support a familial relationship between the teacher and students at this homeschool collective. Familial relationships were beneficial to the teachers and students as they developed personal relationships, engaged in open communication, and facilitated critical conversations.

First, familial relationship is beneficial because it allows the teachers to get to know the students on a personal level that extends beyond the academic level, builds a rapport with students, and addresses concerns that are normally shunned in traditional classrooms for an emotional connection. Yala explained, “A lot of times, I am a social worker. So, I wear a lot of hats and I love it” (Yala, Interview, September 6, 2019). Yala elucidates how her identity as a teacher encompasses many roles. Her strategies intend to develop a personal relationship with students to build a familial rapport beyond a formal and traditional teacher-student relationship dynamic.

Second, a familial relationship is beneficial because it encourages open communication between teachers and students. According to Daniece, communication is most important to building a safe and healthy relationship with students when she said, “You [White teachers in public
and private schools] lack communication skills… You don’t want to communicate” (Daniece, personal communication, August 21, 2019).

While Daniece built a rapport with students, the scenario could have been different had she not first developed a familial relationship with the student. She explained:

Had he went to school, like, the teacher might to have known because from a cultural aspect, you don’t know what he needs. It’s not necessarily a conversation or detention or talk to mom and dad. Do you have the ability, spiritually, to look at one of your babies and know like ‘This is what he needs. Let me pull out my pocketbook and…’ you know! That’s where we come from. (Daniece, personal communication, August 21, 2019)

Daniece further explained, “Circumstance, situation, culture, heritage, education—we’re all the same in here” (Daniece, personal communication, August 21, 2019). When students have teachers that look like them or are culturally congruent, students are more comfortable in the classroom. Cultural similarity and comfortability between teachers and students have proven successful (Irvine, 1989, 2002; Lee, 2005). During an interview, Daniece explained that when she said, “It’s more easy for them to be like, ‘Well, aye, I’m struggling with this.’ You know it’s easy because you look like me and I can identify with you” (Daniece, personal communication, August 21, 2019).

Furthermore, Quinn described the importance of open communication with students’ families when he said, “My phone is on 24/7… just call me. We’ll talk about it… (Quinn, Interview, August 14, 2019). In addition, Quinn does not only see himself as a teacher but as a relative to students and their families which promotes a positive, safe, and supportive relationship through, for example communication methods.
Third, family relationships are beneficial because they allow students and teachers to have candid and critical conversations on various topics. According to teacher interviews, school violence, including racism is the primary reason Black families are homeschooling their children. This is accurate at BSA. A familial relationship encourages a safe and non-violent environment. As a result, this familial relationship is believed to be free of school violence, including peer bullying and racism. This is evident in teachers’ discussion of critical conversations that are often important to Black families in raising their children to survive in a racist world. These lessons are a method of racial protectionism that are promoted through a familial relationship.

Across Black households, Black parents have to teach their children how to respond to police officers as a form of protection for Black students to become well-equipped to challenge and resist racism and survive in a racist society (Mazama, 2015a, 2015b; Mazama & Lundy, 2012). Students discussed personal and worldwide issues in the classroom. Quinn explained:

Your best friend gets shot, and you still got to go to school tomorrow or go see the counselor or—grief counselor... When do we just stop and talk as a group, as family? (Quinn, personal communication, August 14, 2019)

According to interviews, BSA teachers taught cultural lessons with a heavy emphasis on issues concerning race, racism, police brutality, and gun violence. This was a method of racial protectionism (Mazama, 2015a, 2015b; Mazama & Lundy, 2012). Quinn said:

There's things that we do here that you don't get at [public school]... Like, yo, dude's going through some stuff... Let's talk about it. What happened in the situation? How do you feel about it? What could have been different? What are you scared of? Being in the same situation? We'll take time out...
Just talk about some stuff. Talk about why they're shooting. Why the police after them. (Quinn, personal communication, August 14, 2019)

According to teacher interviews, while BSA students are required to fulfill national and state mandated academic requirements consisting of the basic subjects and core content standards, BSA teachers extend beyond these requirements to teach specialized subjects. According to teacher interviews, these subjects were taught before I went to visit during the Post-BSA formation phase. See Table 7 for a chart that I created highlighting a comprehensive list of core and specialized content taught at BSA during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years, prior to the start of this study.

**Table 7**

*A Comprehensive List of Core and Specialized Content Areas at BSA*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Content Areas</th>
<th>Specialized Content Areas at BSA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Arts (Reading, Writing, Grammar, Spelling)</td>
<td>Business Economics and Entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Computer Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics (Mastering the Basics)</td>
<td>Robotics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Yoga and Meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civics</td>
<td>Creative Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engineering</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Financial Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gardening Sciences and Environmental Studies</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Health and Wellness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Home Economics</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Quinn explained, “We pretty much offer everything any learning academy offers and more… that’s the beauty of having your own program ‘cause you can switch it up” (Quinn, personal communication, August 14, 2019). Quinn further explained, “It’s important that we’re on the same page with the child’s development, curriculum, things of that nature, behavior” (Quinn, personal communication, August 15, 2019). According to teacher interviews, *OurStory* and Entrepreneurship were taught at BSA in overlapping and integrated ways related to real-world application as described in the following subsections.

**Teaching OurStory.** According to BSA teachers, students’ exposure to new information challenged their previous knowledge about Black history, people, and their contributions throughout history. BSA students who formerly attended public and private schools, expressed a disinterest in Black history. This disinterest was due to the absence of a focus on Black history and culture in previous schools.

Many students were in disbelief as they learned untold truths about their history in previous public and private schools. Yala explained, “But once I
showed him [former student] this, and then he started lookin', he came back to me, ‘Ms. Yala, I'm sorry. You were right.’ I said, ‘See? I'm makin' progress,’”

Yala described one student who questioned the lessons she taught but eventually believed her after researching the topic. According to Yala, this former student told her, “I don’t believe anything that you’re saying”.

However, when he fact-checked what Yala taught him, he became a believer in the truth. Yala explained, "That was another good day too. When they say, ‘You’re right, Ms. Yala’” (Yala, personal communication, September 5, 2019). Yala described another time when a student didn’t believe her:

> When I told her this stuff, she didn't believe me! She was just shakin' her [head]—just in disbelief, in shock. Like, ‘Uh-uh, Ms. Yala. No. We didn't teach the Greeks. The Greeks started.’ She just was mind-blown… A lot of my students don't believe me. They don't think they're great. One of 'em told me, ‘Ms. Yala, your lyin.’” (Yala, personal communication, September 6, 2019)

According to Quinn, “School systems aren’t serving us because they’re not giving us our history” (Quinn, personal communication, August 21, 2019). Public and private schools traditionally teach history with a focus on Europe and its people with limited information on Black history that is accurate and comprehensive. Public and private schools with a predominately White teaching and administration staff are often found perpetuating an anti-Black curriculum and method of instruction that miseducates all students, especially Black students. Quinn described a students’ disregard of Black history and culture during *OurStory*. Quinn explained that one former student admitted that he was “tired of Black history.” The students’ disregard for Black history was due to the impact of
an anti-Black curriculum that they were exposed to in former public and private schools. Quinn reflected on the conversation with the student when he said:

‘What do you mean, you’re tired of black history?’... I’m like, how could you be tired of black history when you don’t even know who the Panthers are? You don’t even know who Garvey is… You’re tired of them shoving Martin Luther King and glancing over Malcolm X and I feel that. He didn’t even understand what he was tired of ‘cause I’m sitting here, breaking some shit down about the Panthers and Malcolm X, and you’re drooling like, ‘Damn. Wow. I didn’t know.’ (Quinn, personal communication, August 15, 2019)

Quinn uses the collective pronoun “us” as a Black teacher identifying with the struggles of being Black in his teaching of Black students. This experiential teaching style is connected to the familial relationship that he intends to develop between teachers and students who are members of the Black community at BSA. Quinn explained:

The whole atmosphere is towards teaching the kids from our perspective, teaching them that it's okay to love yourself. It's okay to know Swahili and English. It's okay to be Afrocentric. That don't mean you hate anybody. It means you love yourself more. (Quinn, personal communication, August 15, 2019)

Students also learned about their Black culture in the teaching of Black history during *OurStory*, the name of content lessons focused on teaching Black history at many Afrocentric schools. Based on interviews, BSA teachers expressed noticing an improvement in the students’ interest and respect for their African history, culture, and identity. According to Daniece, “They have knowledge of self… you got to give them ‘them’ first. You gotta let em know where they come from” (Daniece, personal communication, August 21, 2019). Quinn affirmed the positive change in students who learned about their Black history in the way that they talked to and interacted with each other over a period of time. Quinn said, “I
know that they’re improving or their perspective on their cultural identity has changed just the way they talk to each other after a while.” (Quinn, personal communication, August 15, 2019). This was a positive outcome of the homeschool collective.

During OurStory, many students embraced truth telling and embodied a newfound love and respect for their Black history. Quinn explained, “They love it. They want to learn more. They always say, 'We didn't get this in JCPS [Jefferson County Public Schools or district schools]. They wouldn't have told us this’” (Quinn, personal communication, August 15, 2019). According to an interview with Quinn, the Afrocentric curriculum, “is the outstanding part of the model ‘cause that’s what our kids need, the re-empowerment” (Quinn, personal communication, August 15, 2019). All BSA teachers verbally expressed the appreciation that their students acquired from learning about their history from an Afrocentric perspective. This homeschool collective’s goal is to correct the miseducation of Black students by teaching core content and subject matter from an Afrocentric perspective with a focus on the truth about Black history from the perspective of Black people to increase students’ cultural pride and self-determination.

Adopting an Entrepreneurial Identity. According to interviews, all teachers discussed Black economics and entrepreneurship at BSA throughout its curriculum as beneficial not only to the personal finances of students, but to the uplift of the Black community with the distribution of healthy products. An interest in Black economics and entrepreneurship evolved into lessons after
discussion of Black history, the Black community’ relationship to money and the accumulation of wealth, and financial literacy. For example, teaching about business ownership and Black economics and entrepreneurship is one way that Black teachers at BSA encourage students to be independent and self-sufficient. Quinn explained that Black economics and entrepreneurship is often absent in public and private schools. He said, “It's like slaves. We teach them to be poor. We teach them to get the job. We don't teach them to start a business… School systems aren't serving us because… they teach us to be poor” (Quinn, personal communication, August 14, 2019). According to an interview with Quinn, upon entering this homeschool collective, BSA students did not identify as entrepreneurs. Daniece agreed when she explained during an interview:

They teach the African child to be successful for them. We got a lot of Black successful babies, children, people, graduating high school, college, going to do great things. But what are you building to give back?... Actually, schools teach you to be workers. They taught you how to fill out a job application; how to conduct an interview. I didn’t learn anything about economics in elementary, middle or high school. And if I did, it didn’t impress me. (Daniece, personal communication, August 14, 2019)

Quinn’s Black Panther-informed ideology focuses on Black independence that explains the need for Black people to own businesses and give back to the Black community. In the context of the Black Panther tradition, Quinn taught entrepreneurial lessons to promote Black liberation from a Black nationalist perspective. For example, Quinn described a math lesson on Black economics and Black economics and entrepreneurship that was connected to OurStory. He taught the history of the Black Panther Party, including their Free Breakfast for Schoolchildren Program in the 1970s, their first survival program funded by the Black and White community that provided a free, hot, and nutritious meal for
children who attended the program (Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, 2008).

Students engaged in a critical conversation and lesson on bureaucracy and the negative financial impact of White funders who were more concerned with receiving a monetary percentage from the programs than feeding people. According to Quinn:

My kids know what bureaucracy means. ‘Oh, that means when you pencil whip us like you did the Panthers with the free lunch program where y'all was mad that all these white people with businesses, and everybody was just giving them food… Our [Black Panthers] survival program was feeding people. (Quinn, personal communication, August 14, 2019)

This Black Panther-informed instructional approach was beneficial as students began to identify as entrepreneurs during lessons on Black economics and Black economics and entrepreneurship. For example, according to teacher interviews, some BSA students launched individual businesses. Of the three, one was a nine-year-old who established a gourmet popcorn business with vegan and non-vegan options sold in local stores. Quinn explained:

Nowhere else was he gonna go in [public school] where they would cultivate it, where they would even address it. The most he'd have got from his teacher, ‘Oh, you got a little lemonade stand. You got a little popcorn business. Good job. You want me to buy a box for you?’ (Quinn, personal communication, August 14, 2019)

Entrepreneurial lessons connect back to the community as students build a business that improves their personal wealth and provides useful products to generate revenue and positively impact the Black community.

Based on interviews, all teachers taught entrepreneurial lessons that allowed students to reflect on products that they are interested in and could benefit the Black community. Entrepreneurial lessons encouraged students to
adopt an entrepreneurial mindset. For example, through Yala admonishment, she encouraged one student to start a popcorn business. Yala enthusiastically explained, “I teach my students, ‘Everybody gotta eat. Open up a business based off necessities, somethin’ you need.’ I’m like, ‘Everybody eat popcorn’” (Yala, September 5, 2019). Students are learning to be business minded by developing a business plan and starting their own business with a focus on their purpose and community needs. There were many benefits to these lessons. According to teacher interviews, students became more interested in their learning because they were able to research and create their own products that they could sell to increase their financial gain while help the people around them.

**Conclusion**

According to teacher interviews, the Black Panther philosophy significantly influenced the instructional practices at BSA. However, there were internal and external forces among the teachers at BSA that resulted in them not getting along. Political, financial, and philosophical conflicts emerged, and BSA returned to its original Afrocentric homeschool collective. However, the most problematic was philosophical conflict. For example, conflicting ideologies with Quinn’s authoritarian instructional approach emerged between teachers, some students, and their families. This conflict led to unforeseen changes with a decline in the student population that impacted this Afrocentric homeschool collective.

BSA teachers were not on the same accord on the homeschool collective’s financial approaches. BSA teachers needed to be on the same page about their contrasting views on the financial obligations and philosophical approaches to
successfully operate this homeschool collective. In an effort to protect the philosophical reputation of the homeschool collective and prevent the homeschool collective from having a negative reputation in the Black community that Yala explained during an interview, “reflected bad on BSA,” Yala chose not to rehire the two former teachers who were affiliated with the RBPP and influenced the identity of BSA as a Black Panther School.

BSA eventually suffered and collapsed as a Black Panther School after the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. In May 2019, due to the homeschool collective’s financial instability, Yala was unable to pay the rent and was evicted from their location causing her to temporarily relocate BSA to a Catholic church during the final week of the 2018-2019 school year as a Black Panther School. The two teachers, Quinn and Daniece, resigned from their teaching positions. Yala resigned as a member of the RBPP and continued the homeschool collective independently. Eventually, BSA transformed from a Black Panther School to its original Afrocentric homeschool collective model.

This chapter examines data collected from individual teacher interviews of one current teacher and two former teachers and their influence at BSA. The timeline in this chapter provides a visual of how the homeschool collective changed over time until the two teachers left. As highlighted in the timeline, Afrocentric curricular choices and instructional practices were implemented, including familial relationships, as the most salient theme across the teacher interviews. Without classroom observations, it is unclear whether Black cultural ways of teachings were actually applied and manifested. However, a complete
discussion of the teachers’ behaviors and practices are beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Chapter 5 focuses on familial relationships as the salient theme that emerged from the interviews of one current teacher and students, classroom observations, and textual artifacts after BSA returned to its original Afrocentric homeschool collective iteration in the contemporary formation of BSA further discussed in chapter 5.
CHAPTER V

DATA ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, AND JOURNEYING THROUGH BSA

*A people without knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots.*
—Marcus Garvey

This chapter analyzes sets of data—interviews of one teacher and her four students, six full days of classroom observations, and textual artifacts such as content from the collective's website and instructional materials. Data collected during this study spanned from July 2019 to November 2019 at Black Scholars Academy (BSA). This chapter argues that familial relationships are the most salient theme in the data.

The Afrocentric philosophy at BSA shifted to a Black Panther philosophy-oriented school model after two former teachers—Black Panther members—influenced the school model. This model included an authoritarian instructional approach. This approach was present during the Black Panther model of this homeschool collective which was before BSA transitioned back to its original Afrocentric model with Yala as the only teacher. This shift occurred after two former BSA teachers, Black Panther members, no longer taught at BSA as described in chapter 4. This information illuminates the purpose of the Black Panthers and Afrocentrists with a focus on Africa and its people in the liberating
education of Black students. Content lessons privileging Black history, culture, and people suggest what it means to use an Afrocentric perspective in a homeschool collective.

Afrocentricity places Black people and their experiences at the center of phenomenon. In the context of this study, Afrocentricity places Black students and their experiences at the center of the educational experience. The benefits and best practices of Afrocentric education allow Black teachers to instruct in ways that support Black students’ development of agency, self-determination, and independence in a racially protective space. An Afrocentric theoretical framework (Asante, 1991; 1998; 2014) provides a method of analysis for this study. This framework explores three components of familial relationships present at BSA, including its definition, evidence, and benefits.

This chapter explores how Yala attempted to promote familial relationships and the students’ responses to those attempts. Each subsection explores how familial relationships were present at BSA. In August 2019, two months prior to the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, I conducted two formal interviews with Yala on two consecutive days—September 5th, 2019 and September 6th, 2019—interviews were approximately 1 to 1.5 hours in length. I also spoke with Yala conversationally during classroom observations. During the 2019-2020 school year, I conducted six-full days of observations for 1-month from October 2019 to November 2019 (specifically October 9, October 10, October 16, October 17, November 7, and November 8). I also scheduled three days—October 10, October 17, and November 8—to conduct interviews with
four individual students that lasted approximately 40 minutes to 1-hour.

Classroom observations lasted four hours which was the approximate length of one full school day at this homeschool collective. Consequently, I present snapshots of brief classroom observations rather than an in-depth, full, or complete picture of the daily life at BSA.

**Familial Relationships**

This chapter examines the development and benefits of familial relationships at this homeschool collective. Familial relationships, representative of an authoritative teaching approach, are important to BSA as it provides a kinship environment that helps to promote a rapport between the teacher, students, and their families. Familial relationships also influence Yala’s curriculum choices and instructional practices at BSA. This rapport allows Yala to engage with and teach her students from an Afrocentric perspective that considers, addresses, and meets the students’ educational and cultural needs and interests.

Yala's dual role as a teacher and family member helped students conform to a familial culture at this homeschool collective. Familial relationship is present during times when the teacher shows physical affection towards students. Yala showed affection to students when she hugged students, kissed a student on the cheek, and stood near students as a guide and support as they completed class assignments. Yala’s interactions with students and their families reflected endearment and affection through physical gestures and verbal affirmations that were displays of affection. One student, Wellington, often required additional
encouragement and motivation to complete class and homework assignments.

Yala intended to build a familial relationship with Wellington to increase his confidence, agency, self-determination, and independence. According to Yala during an interview:

> At the end of the day, yeah, academics is important, but I want my babies to know that they’re loved. To be confident—hugs. That's part of the reason why I had to get out of public schools because you couldn’t hug and do all of that stuff… I hug on ‘em! (Yala, Interview, September 5, 2019)

Yala uses her teacher and familial identities to reinforce high and positive expectations and encourage students to persevere despite adversity through behavior that displayed love and affection at BSA.

While some students struggled with assignments that were difficult for them, Yala took the necessary time to address the student’s areas of concern and culturally affirm them to build their confidence and remind them that they were capable of achievement of success. During the third classroom observation, on October 16, 2019, Wellington became upset about a class assignment that he struggled with. Yala rubbed his face soothingly, explained the task, and affirmed his potential for success. Yala explained to Wellington, “Ms. Yala loves you. When I look at you, I see my son. I’m not just going to let you slip through the cracks. You’re my chocolate baby doll. I love you.” The teacher’s response to Wellington reveals that affection is used to emotionally connect with her students as a way to help advocate for them in the classroom so that they feel accepted in a familial environment.

Furthermore, during the fourth classroom observation, on October 17, 2019, Yala explained, “I’ve been having to give him extra kisses and hugs today.”
This verbal expression of Yala’s familial connection with Wellington provides evidence of her affection towards students and how she culturally affirmed their value and abilities in the classroom. During an interview, Yala empathetically shared the importance of showing love, nurturance, and affection to students when she discussed the absence of these pillars of familial relationship in many public and private schools. She said:

They ain't gettin' love… They don't get hugs. Told how awesome they are. At the end of the day, that's what I want, for them to know that they're loved, to know that they're great. That's the answer. That's the solution, period—education—but they [public and private school teachers] don't wanna hear that. They don't wanna hear that, sis. (Yala, personal communication, September 6, 2019)

Yala’s teaching approach, incorporating love and affection, contrasts her homeschool collective from public and private schools that often reject familial interactions between the teacher and students. Yala uses body gestures as an example of love and affection at this homeschool collective. She gives students fist bumps and the Black power fist, culturally specific hand gestures, to celebrate Black students at BSA. The colloquial expression of a fist bump, popularized as a greeting by President Barack Hussein Obama and his wife Michelle Obama, symbolizes approval or praise for the student.

Yala also uses familial roles as a surrogate parent to encourage students to develop a sense of respect for authority figures and elders and reinforce student expectations and positive behavior. Yala communicates her high expectations with students by employing an authoritative teaching style that helped promote a familial relationship reflective of a mother and child dynamic between the teacher and students, similarly found in a Black parenting style. During one classroom
observation, Yala redirected a student when she said, “I’m getting ready to turn into Auntie Yala.” This quote signifies how Yala used familial relationships as both a parental figure who is both a disciplinarian and affectionate towards students. This is a method of discipline that is enacted in the role that Yala plays in the classroom as both a family member and teacher to her students. The students understood Yala’s redirection by conforming to the student expectations in the classroom. This relationship reinforced high expectations and warm demanders reflective of an authoritative teaching style (Irvine & Fraser, 1998). When students receive Yala’s directive and corrective feedback, they respond by adhering to their teacher’s advice as a form of respect for their familial relationship. According to Foster (1989), students respect their teachers when they exert control and high expectations. This is obvious in the way that students receive and apply Yala’s constructive feedback to improve their lives. African scholar Mbiti (1990) writes, “A person shows his love for another more through action than through words” (p. 38). Mbiti’s ideas of the central importance to actions reflecting love are evident in the way that Yala interacts with and teaches students. This type of loving and nurturing interaction is different from students’ previous negative schooling experiences in previous public and private schools as profiled in the appendix of this dissertation. An authoritative instructional approach through positive reinforcement isn’t necessarily Afrocentric, but the way Yala practices the general principle, in conjunction with her familial relationships to students, promote an Afrocentric vision. According to Walker (2009), “The best teachers were parents who provided increased support in
response to failure and did not interfere with the child’s autonomy after success. These teachers were identified as authoritative teachers” (p. 125). An authoritative instructional approach is important to the Afrocentric classroom because it addresses the high expectations of the greatness of a student from a Black cultural perspective that places the needs and interests of people of African heritage at the center of the teaching and learning experience.

During another classroom observation, students engaged in a geography lesson led by Isis, a student who focused on the life and legacy of Nipsey Hustle, a rapper and entrepreneur who was tragically killed. Yala clapped and responded to Isis stating, “I love it! Everybody give her a hand.” Yala, then, holds up her fist and says, “I’ll give her a Black power salute.” In addition, throughout the school day, Yala offers positive affirmations through verbal praise to students for answering questions correctly and helping their peers reflecting a sibling relationship. For example, when a student answers a question correctly, she congratulates them with a response that reflects affection, such as, “Good job, love!” During a math lesson on the fourth day of observation held on October 17, 2019, Yala was heard praising a student for her work ethic and offering encouragement when she said, “Get it! Isis is on fire today! Be like this every day! I don’t expect anything less!” Yala intends to use positive and culturally affirming words, phrases, and gestures reflecting Black culture to praise and encourage students’ work ethic and independence to acquire their traditional greatness. Authoritative teaching is one way that Yala intends to usher students to reach their fullest potential or what she refers to as “greatness.” For example,
during a classroom observation, Yala’s celebratory responses affirmed students’ “greatness.” She was observed paraphrasing the following words to students at the end of each school day, “I see nothin' but greatness in you.” Yala recognized students’ effort, abilities, achievement, and “greatness” which speaks to the vision and goals of this homeschool collective. Yala also recognized students’ “greatness” with a certificate of recognition, equivalent to “Student of the Week,” often found in public and private schools. On the sixth and last classroom observation for this study on November 8, 2019, Wellington was awarded for his academic progress. Although Wellington previously struggled with his confidence and academics, over two weeks, he showed improvement exhibited in his work ethic, independence, and motivation in completing class and homework assignments. As a result, Wellington was rewarded for his efforts with this certificate of recognition.

Yala intends to build a healthy rapport with her students and their families through these distinct parental roles and responsibilities with Afrocentric features. During a classroom observation, when Blair’s mother arrived at BSA to donate culturally relevant curriculum-based books, Yala stated, “I’m seeing my fam [family] today!” During other classroom observations, Yala uses a mix of familial terms of endearment and African cultural identifiers like “African kings,” “queens,” “empress,” and “royal” when referring to students and their families. For example, Yala referred to Blair’s mother as “Empress” and “Sis.” In the Afrocentric community, “Empress” is used to identify someone of royal social status. The term “Sis” symbolizes a sisterly or sibling-like relationship. Familial
culture is present in instructional documents and student handouts, including the Weekly Progress Report, at this homeschool collective. As shown in the picture below, Yala used this form to record each students' academic and behavioral progress. On the form, familial culture is present in the Kiswahili phrase, Asante Sana Family, translated in English to “Thank you very much, family.” These kinship and cultural terms of endearment, including Kiswahili are features of Afrocentricity that express Black cultural kinship and a connection to prestige and importance in the Black community. Yala is teaching through affection that Black is not bad and that students are seen as members of Yala’s extended family. When Yala says this, she is also asserting a different future for her students. Familial culture is a Black cultural practice with features of Afrocentricity reflective of an extended Black family.

Yala promoted familial relationships that encouraged BSA students to develop a peer-as-sibling relationship. The students first resisted a kinship connection. However, the longer students attended this homeschool collective, their relationship and connection increased. This was apparent during classroom observations when a peer-to-sibling relationship and sharing of personal
information in the classroom also existed among students to continue supporting students’ greatness.

**Peer-as-Sibling Relationships in the Classroom**

Based on interviews and classroom observations, many BSA students did not initially agree with or accept the familial relationship that Yala encouraged due to their previous experiences as former public and private schools where kinship was practically nonexistent. BSA students only accepted the familial culture after spending some time at the homeschool collective where they became more comfortable with how Yala taught and interacted with students from a familial orientation. The comfort level of a student was indicated in the amount of time that he or she attended BSA, leading to a change in how students interacted with their teacher and other students. As a result, students became more acquainted and comfortable with Yala and their peers at BSA. Familial relationships would become evident in students’ behavior in the classroom particularly as they committed to motivating each other and conforming to Yala’s high expectations during learning experiences.

Students need time and scaffolding to come around to the idea of peer-as-sibling relationships. Resistance ensued throughout the journey of students developing a peer-as-sibling relationship. Students like Isis and Wellington initially rejected the familial orientation at BSA. According to an interview with Isis and classroom observations, she initially rejected a familial culture. For instance, Isis did not see her teacher or peers as a family as a new student at this homeschool collective. However, the familial culture at this homeschool
collective influenced her to change and embrace kinship by the third classroom observation. Isis eventually encouraged and offered feedback to her peers as someone who cares about their development in the classroom. Isis encouraged a peer, Wellington, to follow directions and finish his class assignment when she clarified the teacher's instructions. During this classroom event, the school was a safe space to share personal information as a therapeutic teaching and learning moment. Sharing personal stories and experiences in the classroom help the teacher and students to relate to one another thus increasing a familial relationship. After attending BSA for a month, Isis was observed speaking transparently with her teacher and peers about family struggles in the classroom, pertaining to a custody battle involving her, during which she became visually emotional. Yala helped Isis overcome her resistance to a familial relationship by offering affection and understanding at this homeschool collective.

On another occasion, peer-as-sibling relationships were particularly apparent between Isis and Wellington during classroom observations. Isis encouraged Wellington, who she previously described as “getting on [her] nerves” to complete his homework assignments and pay attention in class after the teacher verbally redirected and affirmed him. When Isis takes on the responsibility of an older student to motivate a younger peer to take his school work seriously by turning in his homework assignments and pay attention in class, this motivation is an example of peer-to-peer encouragement through a familial relationship. This interaction is familial as it reveals the values in the classroom, including understanding, accountability, leadership, comradery, and
community. Whether friendship or familial, a relationship is developed between both the teacher and across peers in their compassionate interactions, including helping one another, which indicates the development of a familial relationship between students.

The familial relationship dynamic is also apparent when students like Isis, who did not initially conform to the familial culture at this homeschool collective, share intimate details about their lives that they designated as only for “family” to know during classroom observation. For example, when Isis attended the first few days of school, she expressed during an interview that she did not view the collective as a family and would not share personal information at the homeschool collective. Isis’ intimate sharing of her personal life in the classroom setting reveals her vulnerability and sense of safety in this homeschool collective. Yala’s familial role as a surrogate mother to students, including Isis, was nurturing, supportive, empathetic, and compassionate. Yala, who empathized with Isis, described the domestic custody battle as “adult issues.” Yala explained, “It’s not fair for you, baby. My heart is breaking for you. It’s going to work out.” In contextualizing this noted classroom learning event, Yala encourages and affirms Isis that the negative incident in her family will get better. Yala validates and motivates Isis to think positively. Based on the teacher and student dialogic exchange, Yala is attempting to help Isis see the value and power of her words in shaping her current reality.

Yala promotes a familial relationship among all students when she encourages them to help one another on classroom assignments. When students
begin to exhibit a peer-as-sibling relationship type of behavior, Yala recognizes and encourages it. As evident during class observations, Isis demonstrated resistance to conformity with the peer-as-sibling relationship when she clarified to a peer, Blair, the objectives of the class assignment after he arrived late to school. These two peer-to-peer interactions reveal a sibling relationship developed among Isis, who did not initially view the homeschool collective in a familial way.

Yala was always quick to praise and offer positive affirmations whenever she saw the students exhibiting this familial culture. When Yala noticed the familial relationship, she offered positive affirmation to encourage it to continue. For example, Yala was observed saying, “Way to help… we’re family!” Yala consistently reiterated the importance of a familial relationship to establish a family-oriented culture among students at BSA. As a result, there were instances of student buy-in of a familial culture highlighting positive affirmations as a salient theme present at this homeschool collective. An authoritative instructional approach contrasts with traditional public and private schools. Yala explained, “A lot of the things that I do and say I wouldn’t be able to do in the regular schools. This quote reflects how teachers are often, such as when Yala was prohibited by school administrators as a public school teacher as described in chapter 4. This quote also proves that Yala exhibits kinship through affection with students that poses academically and culturally beneficial to students.

**Afrocentric Features in the Curriculum and Instruction at BSA**

Afrocentric schools like BSA embrace an African time orientation designed around students’ circumstances which is a purposeful way in which Yala
teaches Black history in connection to students’ lives. The issue of using time more effectively and efficiently in schools was recognized by Black educators across history dating back to Booker T. Washington. Washington, while not an Afrocentrist, as the concept didn’t exist at the time, was a Black intellectual and industrialist concerned about the education of Black people. Washington (1904) wrote that “For six hours the life of these children is an artificial one. The apparatus which they use is, as a rule, artificial, and they are taught in an artificial manner about artificial things” (p. 158). This quote alludes to how time is often wasted in classrooms due to the lack of purposeful and meaningful curriculum and instruction. African scholar Mbiti (1990) also alluded to the difference in time based on culture when he explained:

For the people concerned, time is meaningful at the point of the event and not at the mathematical moment. In western or technological society, time is a commodity which must be utilized, sold and bought; but in traditional African life, time has to be created or produced. Man is not a slave of time; instead, he ‘makes’ as much time as he wants (p. 19).

Mbiti’s conceptualization of time in African culture is fluid and flexible which further expands on the difference between how time operates in an African versus Western cultural environment. An African time orientation is present at this homeschool collective in the daily school schedule. Table 9 illustrates an overview of a week at BSA. This table demonstrates how students learn the seven Kwanzaa principles, focusing on one per day, in connection to their lives and the Black community.

Table 9

An Overview of BSA’s Weekly Homeschool Instructional Schedule
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day/ Planet</th>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
<th>Full Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Kujichagulia</td>
<td>1-hour session</td>
<td>Home visits to individual</td>
<td>Yala visits each student’s home on Mondays and Tuesdays. She works with individual students and their caregivers to develop and teach from an individualized learning plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sun)</td>
<td>(Self Determination)</td>
<td>that varies per family</td>
<td>students’ homes.</td>
<td>For 1-hour, Yala focuses on each students’ strengths and areas of need using one-on-one instruction and tutoring. Yala disseminates homework for the rest of the week. Same as Monday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Ujima</td>
<td>1-hour session</td>
<td>Home visits to individual</td>
<td>Yala teaches students together in the public library. Students represent various ages/grade levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Moon)</td>
<td>(Cooperative</td>
<td>that varies per</td>
<td>students’ homes.</td>
<td>Yala teaches students together in the public library. Students represent various ages/grade levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsibility)</td>
<td>family</td>
<td></td>
<td>Same as Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Ujamaa</td>
<td>A full-day from</td>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>Yala teaches students together in the public library. Students represent various ages/grade levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mars)</td>
<td>(Cooperative</td>
<td>11:30am- 3:30pm</td>
<td></td>
<td>Same as Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economics)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yala teaches students together in the public library. Students represent various ages/grade levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Nia</td>
<td>A full-day from</td>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>Same as Wednesday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mercury)</td>
<td>(Purpose)</td>
<td>11:30am- 3:30pm</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yala teaches students together in the public library. Students represent various ages/grade levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Kuumba</td>
<td>A full-day from</td>
<td>Fieldtrips</td>
<td>Visits locations with students, including the Zoo, various museums and art galleries, community centers, and local parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Jupiter)</td>
<td>(Creativity)</td>
<td>11:30am-3:30pm</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yala teaches generalized content to fulfill state and nationally mandated core content standards expected of public and private schools and adhered to homeschooling laws. However, she also taught from a culture-infused curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
comprised of historical and cultural lessons focused on people of African heritage. As an Afrocentric educator, Yala’s curricular choices and instructional practices revealed features of Afrocentricity including the implementation of an African time orientation and a personalized learning plan. This decision to teach beyond mandated curriculum with a focus on Black history and culture speaks to Yala’s investment in creating a familial environment with students and their families to accommodate students’ developmental needs and cultural lives.

Yala’s family-oriented curriculum was flexible in consideration of students’ academic and cultural needs. Much like Mbiti discusses, Yala is not a “slave of time” or to a school schedule. This is displayed in her daily schedule. In contrast to many public and private schools, BSA typically started at 11:30am and ended around 3:30pm, which is a 4-hour school day. However, BSA’s start time fluctuated based on the needs of the students and their families as it related to unforeseen circumstances, such as transportation and weather issues. For example, Yala canceled and rescheduled one school day after a couple of her students became sick and were unable to attend school. Another example of her flexible school schedule is visible when Yala met with and taught individual students on Mondays and Tuesdays in their own homes. On Wednesdays and Thursdays, Yala and students met as a group at a public library. Missed school days were often made up on alternative days when school wasn’t scheduled, such as Fridays.

Across many public and private schools, the start time is 7:30am and ending time is 2:30pm for a 7-hour school day. Teachers at these schools often
teach content in time-regimented, rigid, and inflexible periods or blocks. In an interview, a student, Wellington, contrasted the schedule of a public school from BSA when he said, “We waste like seven hours of our day in public school. We can just do learning for at least like two hours and go about our day. It’s long for no reason.” According to Wellington, “We get out earlier than public school… I get home earlier than everybody. We get to do stuff on our time—that’s the big one that I like.” The concept and concerns about time were central to the development of a personalized learning approach that Yala implemented with students.

The flexibility schedule at this homeschool collective was noticed by many students like Mia, a student who was pregnant at BSA, as positive and beneficial in stark contrast from previous schooling experiences. For example, Mia expressed that her previous public school teachers, a predominately White institution in teachers, administrators, and curriculum, often failed to assist her or other students with a question or offer academic support in the classroom. This was due to limited time or an inflexible school schedule that privileged a Western time orientation and the teaching of mandated curriculum that focused on Europe and its people. Mia described her former public school and the way content was taught as “White everything,” leading her, like so many other Black students, to feel “invisible” or not valued in the classroom.

In contrast to these previous negative experiences in public school, the Afrocentric aspects of the curriculum and instruction at BSA reveals that Yala’s flexible homeschool schedule directly addressed students’ concerns and promoted
their academic and cultural development. During another occasion, an African
time orientation that was flexible and supportive was observed when Yala
explained her high expectations for Wellington and his peers and gave him
additional time to complete his unfinished homework assignment in class. The
goal was for Wellington to take ownership of his education by holding himself
accountable and completing his academic goals. Throughout classroom learning
events, Yala adjusted and modified her teaching schedule to accommodate
students. This respect for time is shown in the value for the production of quality
student work through extra support and assistance. Yala considered the time in
which it took for students to complete their assignments. She was not concerned
with students working quickly. Instead, she gave students additional time to
complete their work in a manner that not only fit their learning differences but
their interests.

**The Aspects of a Personalized Learning Plan**

The development of a personalized learning plan for students is another
feature of Afrocentric education at this homeschool collective. A personalized
learning plan is a benefit of a familial relationship established the teacher and
students. Yala supplemented this generalized curriculum with a personalized
curriculum to fit both the academic and cultural needs of Black students. During
an interview, Yala explained that there was not a “one size fits all” curriculum
and that “You can’t judge everybody according to the same standards.” Each
student had a personalized learning plan focusing on students’ interests that were
prioritized at BSA. Yala explained during an interview that personalized student
learning plans are “tailored to student learning, preferences and interests.” A personalized learning plan is one way that Yala attempts to build a familial relationship with students and their families. She acknowledges each student’s personhood to foster strong and healthy connections. The development of a familial relationship between the teacher and students allowed Yala to adapt, adjust, and modify her curriculum and instruction to meet their needs. For example, during classroom observations, Yala emphasized student-centered and project-based learning opportunities, including pregnancy/parenting and Black entrepreneurship lessons.

In regard to pregnancy and parenting, Mia was interested in learning about and maintaining a healthy pregnancy, child rearing practices, and time management. Yala understood the importance of a healthy pregnancy. As a result, she provided Mia with books on what to expect as a new pregnant mother. Yala gifted Mia a popular best-selling book about pregnancy. On another observed classroom event, Mia was given the responsibility and leadership role of helping to read to and manage the behavior of pre-school age children in the school. For example, during a classroom observation, while BSA peers worked on a math assignment, Mia read a book to the children.

Yala also encouraged Mia to develop strong time management skills. Yala encouraged Mia to use an agenda to track and balance her school schedule, doctor’s appointments, and transportation responsibilities. For example, Yala assigned Mia a goal setting assignment with the intention of helping her establish a consistent habit in scheduling her day with important tasks to accomplish. Mia
appreciated the accommodations and flexibility of the homeschool schedule when she said, “She [Yala] let me pick my own time to start and to end so I picked 11:30a-3:30p because waking up in the morning is really hard.” Mia’s personalized learning plan aimed to help her to develop her responsibility skills as a new mother and student.

Black entrepreneurship is another feature of personalized learning found at BSA. Yala references the *Nguzo Saba* or the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa—translated into Kiswahili. Using three *Kwanzaa* principles—*Nia* or purpose, *Ujamaa* or cooperative economics, and *Kujichagulia* or self-determination—Yala teaches entrepreneurial lessons emphasizing the importance of business ownership to address economic struggles and build wealth in the Black community. Yala connected her identity as an entrepreneur to the *Kwanzaa* principles to encourage the importance of financial literacy in the Black community. She described her financial and cultural responsibilities and independence when she said, “I don’t get any grants, loans, corporate sponsors. I’m doing this for my ancestors. I know my *Nia*. I got *Kujichagulia*. I do this because of *Ujima*. “ Yala references the *Kwanzaa* principles to empower students to own a business that benefits the Black community.

Entrepreneurship lessons were also discussed in connection with *OurStory* lessons applicable to students’ lives and the real world. For example, Yala asked the students, “What’s a vocation? Use your context clues.” One student replied, “A job!” Yala continued, “What’s a collective?” When students do not answer, she replies, “Our collective vocation. It’s like a group. It should be our job to
build and develop our community.” In this quote, Yala encourages students to reflect on their roles and responsibilities in the development of the Black community through entrepreneurship. According to Yala:

I’m not the type of teacher where ‘you gotta go to college.’ No. focus on skills, trades— that way you can turn it into a business and work for yourself because business ownership is the only way to build that generational wealth and that’s why I’m focusing on generational wealth. I want another Black Wall Street. And at the end of the day, the only way to do it is through Business ownership and entrepreneurship. (Yala, personal communication, September 6, 2019)

Yala is committed to teaching lessons that build Black financial capital by encouraging students to exercise options beyond taking the traditional route to college and to become entrepreneurs.

Familial relationships are evident in personalized learning plans with both academic and personal aspects. This is apparent in the personalized learning plan of students like Blair who was influenced by Yala to start a business and change his eating habits to become vegan. During one classroom observation, with the acknowledgment and consideration of Blair’s interest, Yala provided an opportunity for him to explore the process of starting a business. This personalized learning plan developed from a familial relationship allowed Blair to adopt an entrepreneurial identity after acclimating to Afrocentric education.

According to classroom observations, Yala consulted with Blair and his mother to develop a personalized student learning plan focused on Black entrepreneurship consisting of books on economics and business management. For example, During a time when many in the class were exploring a geography lesson, Yala allowed Blair to read his books on Black entrepreneurship. This observation
reveals a familial relationship between the teacher, student, and his mother, that further supported student-centered and customized assignments.

The familial relationship established between Yala and Blair also supported Blair’s desire to change his eating habits to become vegan and pursue his entrepreneurial endeavors in the vegan industry. During a lesson, Yala explained to students, “We like candy, sweets. Vegan candy’s healthy for you. That's part of my curriculum—holistic health.” Yala explained, “I want them [students] to be producers. All we do is consume, but we need to create more. We talk about black businesses. We have to teach our children that when they grow up, you need to start one [business].” Blair agreed with the effectiveness of Yala’s integrated instructional model. He explained, “We learn about how saving up your money and how much you should plan for certain things like your account savings and to yourself (Blair, personal communication, October 10, 2019).” Blair’s comment shows that he is learning business management skills.

Blair was not only inspired by Yala’s identity as a vegan and entrepreneur, but by the lessons that she taught on the Kwanzaa principles. During classroom observations, the Kwanzaa principles were often referenced to discuss the process and benefits of starting a business to build independence and wealth in the Black community. Based on observations, it is apparent that Blair is motivated by his teacher’s identity and classroom lessons on the Kwanzaa principles to become vegan, start a business, name his business *Ujamaa Bakery* (a Kwanzaa principle), and provide vegan dessert products to the greater community. For example, the Kwanzaa principles are found in Blair’s business name and purpose. According to
an interview, by the end of the 2018-2019 school year, Blair started *Ujamaa Bakery*, a vegan dessert company with products sold in local farmer’s markets and accessible to the Black community. The naming of his business reveals Blair’s understanding and application of *Ujamaa* as a *Kwanzaa* principle to his personal life and company. Blair explained his inspiration for starting a vegan business when he said: “I learned about the Kwanzaa principles ever since I joined this school, and I started to learn more about it because we always recite an oath and a Kwanzaa principle every day.” Blair further explained, “Ms. Yala gave me some motivation off it… She was talking about how in certain restaurants, they don’t have any vegan food.” Black community control through entrepreneurship leads to nation-building and growth. Yala intends to develop young Black entrepreneurs among her students to contribute to their communities in positive ways. Yala explained, “Hopefully, I am molding and training young entrepreneurs.” Then, in a jokingly way, she expressed to the whole class, “I want y’all to be business owners, and one day y’all can write Ms. Yala a check.” Yala’s encouragement of students’ adoption of the *Kwanzaa* principles and an entrepreneurial identity in the classroom intend to build students’ confidence, leadership, independence, and agency.

Blair’s decision to start this business reflects Yala’s influence. A familial relationship between the teacher and students allowed for a positive teaching and learning outcome that led students like Blair to develop an entrepreneurial identity. Yala’s familial relationship with students like Blair is found in her attentiveness to students’ interests. According to an interview with Blair, since he
has attended BSA, he has seen a drastic change in himself. He has become more interested in his education and starting a business. Blair who explained, “I always said I wanted to create something, but I never did,” broke free of this mentality as a homeschool student and began to identify as an entrepreneur.

**Educating to Liberate**

Familial relationships influenced the content that Yala taught as she focused on what she knew about her students academically and culturally. Yala created a personalized learning plan for students with the knowledge of their developmental and cultural needs. This plan honored an African time orientation to fit each students’ learning style with consideration to promoting a flexible time and pace for students to work on assignments of their interest that leveraged students’ “liberation” and “traditional greatness.” According to an interview with Yala and the collective’s website, the mission, vision, and goal of BSA is “to educate to liberate” Black students to their “traditional greatness” (“Black Scholars Academy,” n.d.). Table 10 comprises of BSA’s mission, vision, and goals as illustrated on the homeschool collective’s website.

**Table 10**

*The BSA mission, vision, and goals ("Black Scholars Academy," n.d.)*

| **Mission** | The mission of this homeschool collective is to liberate the student through an Afrocentric or African-centered curriculum. |
| **Vision** | The mantra is “to educate to liberate.” |
| **Goals** | The objectives are “to reprogram, rebuild, and restore our traditional greatness.” |
These goals are also apparent in the BSA’s Weekly Agenda. This agenda was presented during every classroom observation as an instructional artifact. It was a point of reference and accountability system that tracked students' daily and weekly learning goals.

Familial relationships are manifested through the teaching of *OurStory* and the practice of Rising Meeting. *OurStory* and Rising Meeting are two components of how familial relationships are used to help students build an understanding of their Black history and culture through accurate narratives and daily traditions. Both of these beneficial components of familial relationships venerate the contributions of African ancestors and encourage their purposeful legacy through the lives of their descendants who strive to accomplish the mission of liberation and restoration to one’s traditional greatness.

*OurStory*

*OurStory* is one of the most salient themes of familial relationships that Yala implemented and manifested at BSA. Yala uniquely uses the term *OurStory*— the teaching of Black history from a Black cultural perspective to name the curriculum and her approach to teaching content at this homeschool collective.

Familial relationships are present in two ways at BSA— the name of the content and the learning experiences that emerge from the historical and contemporary lessons applicable to students' lives. First, familial relationships are present in the name of the content. *OurStory* is asserting a kinship fidelity and responsibility in the students. In this case, the name of the
content, *OurStory*, signifies the cultural history of the teacher and students at BSA. The emphasis on “Our” directly speaks to an accurate collective history taught for and by Black people to “educate to liberate” and return students to their "traditional greatness." Hence, the title *OurStory* signifies a shared or common cultural heritage, ancestry, and lived experience among Black people or people of African descent.

As described in chapter 2, many teachers who identify as Afrocentric, like Yala, teach Black history and name it *OurStory*. Across many public and private schools, American history offers an inaccurate depiction of history and the Black experience in the United States. However, *OurStory*, in contrast to American history, offers an accurate account of history taught from a Black cultural perspective. At BSA, Yala aims to prevent the miseducation of the Black student by teaching the truth from an Afrocentric perspective that challenges monocultural White American history that many of her students experienced as former public and private school students. *OurStory* or Black history lessons emphasized unsung and sung African American heroes and ancestors such as Mansa Musa, Granville T. Woods, and Harriet Tubman. Yala explains:

My problem with the school system is they teach our babies they come from slaves, they’re descendants of slaves but what about Mansa Musa? The richest man ever! He caused a recession because he gave out all that gold… What about we were goddesses, and kings and queens? Why don’t our babies know that? Why don’t our babies know that one time we were the only people on the planet? Why don’t our babies know that our ancestors created math and science? (Interview, Yala, May 26, 2017)

Blair agreed with Yala when he said, “From being here, I learned about people I never knew like Mansa Musa, who is the richest man in history who passed along
gold to other people… I was actually interested and surprised off of it.” Yala invites students to “rule again” by using historical facts about the contribution of ancestors to apply to their lives. This concept of “ruling again” speaks to previous leadership and prestige inherent in African culture. The concept of “ruling again” is Afrocentric in the way that Yala “educates to liberate” and help students to return to their “traditional greatness” by presenting accurate narratives about Black history and culture.

Yala debunks historical myths with the *OurStory* curriculum by challenging traditional American history that often leaves out or devalues the presence of indigenous and Black persons. For example, in American history, myths are widely taught such as the mistruth that Black people are descendants of slaves rather than recognized first as African people and contributors to civilizations. A second mistruth is the myth that the Greeks and Romans are the architects of civilization. The third mistruth is the myth that Christopher Columbus, romanticized as an American hero, discovered America and helped the indigenous people on the continent. At BSA, his exploitation of the indigenous Native American community is viewed as the beginning of the first incidence of human genocide and mass violence in America. These myths are far from truth which is the motivation for Yala to tell the truth about history from a Black cultural perspective that is centered on people of African descent.

At BSA, *OurStory* lessons are chronological, accurate, and culturally inclusive American history facts from a Black cultural perspective. *OurStory* begins with lessons on early African dynasties, civilizations, and empires across
eras to the present-day. Yala was observed, during OurStory lessons, debunking other cultural myths that discredit the presence and contribution of people of African heritage. Yala explained that “[American] History teaches you that the Greeks and Romans started everything, but that’s not true. All they did was change the name [of historical events and people in history]” (Yala, personal communication, September 6, 2019). During an interview, Yala contrasted how she taught Black history with how American history is often taught in public and private schools. She said:

What makes my school different is we are African centered, and we teach it from an African perspective. Like, for instance, the Kentucky Derby, my students are taught that we won the first Kentucky Derby… So, my students are taught what’s missing. We fill in the gaps. (Interview, Yala, September 6, 2019)

Yala was able to teach these lessons through texts often used across public and private schools in connection to culturally diverse sources and materials.

During interviews, Yala used a combination of material and resources—math workbooks and American history textbooks mass-produced by traditional publishing companies—found in traditional public and private schools to satisfy state and national content mandates. She also referenced Black cultural material and resources. Classroom observations revealed the presence of 12 texts that Yala used as instructional resources. Nine of those texts were Black cultural texts. Three of those texts were content books that covered general math. A snapshot of the type of textual materials that Yala consulted are provided in the Appendix. Black history lessons were also taught through storytelling and literature. For example, storytelling, African folktales, Black children’s books, news articles on
Black history and culture, and Black literature were all resources that helped to tell an accurate story of Black history and culture from both a historical and contemporary perspective at this homeschool collective.

Yala’s teaching of OurStory or Black history lessons led to the sharing of experiences during critical conversations and the contemporary impact of historical issues. During these conversations, the teacher and students connected institutional and systemic racial inequities that have impacted Black people throughout history to the present day. Topics included institutional racism, white privilege, racial violence, incarceration, and safety. These critical conversations connecting historical issues and current-day issues were a benefit of OurStory.

Yala allowed students the time and space to share personal experiences as teachable moments in the classroom. The goal was to equip students to challenge issues, including institutional and systemic racism, and prepare students to solve real-world problems. These conversations illustrated a lively and passionate dialogue or back and forth transaction between the teacher and students. These conversations revealed students' interest in Black history that investigated, for example, the history of racism and the role of the fraternal order of police in connection to incidents of the unlawful police shooting of Black people throughout the U.S. Yala explained:

White supremacy is real. Our babies are taught that every day you walk out that door that you are a victim of white supremacy racism… racism is so subtle… our youth don’t even think it exists any more. So, we have to teach our babies that racism and white supremacy is alive and well. (Yala, personal communication, September 6, 2019)

Furthermore, Yala and students discussed unlawful police shootings four days after one particular police shooting. On October 12, 2019, Atatiana Jefferson
was shot and killed inside her home by a White police officer during a non-
emergency wellness check in Fort Worth, Texas (Ortiz, 2019). Yala shared this
recent news story to help students to see the value in the historical and
contemporary issues of racial violence that have led to an outcry of protests for
Black lives against racial profiling and police brutality impacting both Black men
and women.

Yala encourages students to know about current events, especially issues
impacting the lives of Black people. For example, during a classroom lesson, Yala
connects the historical context of fugitive slave catchers to the fraternal order of
police. She explains, “They [slave catchers] were the first police officers, so
historically, that’s really why our people don’t like the police.” This history of
the fraternal order of police is discussed in the contemporary relevance of racial
violence and the increase in police brutality cases leading to the unjust killing
of unarmed Black people in America. Yala chooses to frame modern events in a
historical way that connects to her mission and vision in liberating her students
and helping them return to their traditional greatness. During this classroom
observation, Wellington responds, “I don’t like cops!” Yala used this current case
to investigate the history of racism and challenge the criminality of Black people.
Despite the racist history of the U.S. police, Yala presents a fair position as she
challenges students to recognize two different perspectives, that not all police
officers are “bad” or intentionally cause harm. Yala explained, “But wait a
minute… At the end of the day, the police are to protect and serve… There are
some good police officers.” Yala is teaching students not to stereotype but to
understand that not all police are racist despite the history of the fraternal order of police. A familial relationship helped the teacher and students to navigate these difficult conversations because trust had been developed that allowed for a feeling of safety and comfortability.

This discussion encouraged many BSA students to talk about their personal experiences with police that extended to a conversation about the criminal justice system and issues of inequity. These conversations are essential for Black families to have with their children as a racially protective response to racism. Yala explained how OurStory lessons in geography, civics, and political science, focused on the impact of racism on the lives of Black people. At BSA, students learn life skills, including problem-solving, critical thinking, and empathy (Allen-Hughes, 2013; Bruce et al., 2006). Critical conversations focusing on racial violence are impactful to students in the classroom. According to Shockley (2011):

They need an education that is reminiscent of their own special situation. It is unscrupulous that Afrocentric education offers a resolve for the miseducation of Black children, yet no real efforts to understand it and make sure that Black children are exposed to it exist en masse anywhere in the United States today (p. 1044).

With a newfound understanding and respect for Black history or OurStory, students made personal connections to and challenged institutional and systematic racism on a historical and contemporary level connected to their lives and experiences. These personal discussions are grounded in an Afrocentric theoretical framework exemplifying the concept of familial relationships focusing on building a connection, rapport, and trust between the teacher and students. This
relationship helped foster a comfortable, safe, and protective safe for students to
share true accounts of traumatic experiences. For example, many BSA students
have been negatively affected by interactions with the police. During one
classroom observation, Yala explained the importance of teaching OurStory in the
classroom when she said:

Civics is important, too. That's part of OurStory, too. We gotta know our
rights. That's the biggest part. We gotta know the law, too. Ignorance of the
law is no excuse. We also have to teach our babies how to be competent
citizens. Unfortunately, with the criminal justice system, especially our
black boys need to know their rights, like that one little black boy that got
pulled over in his mama's car, goin' to the store. We've gotta teach our babies
the laws, too, just because of the climate. That's another reason why we
gotta teach our babies. (Yala, Classroom Observation, October 16, 2019)

BSA students expressed that they suffered from sleep deprivation and Post
Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after encounters with police officers.
According to Love (2019), “Approximately 62 percent of all children come to
school every day experiencing some type of trauma” (p. 75). Based on student
interviews, school violence was one of the primary motivations for an education
at a homeschool collective.

One student, Isis, connected this discussion to a personal experience
concerning her domestic living conditions and the previous incarceration of her
parents. She explained, “My Daddy got locked up, and he’s still doing good!...
My momma got locked up— she’s good.” Wellington relates to Isis when he says,
“I know someone who got locked up.” Students and teachers are engaged and
connected to the conversation. Isis argued that even if previously incarcerated,
people can change for the better, be successful, get their life back on track, and be
“good.” Isis references her parents as exemplars who were formerly incarcerated
but managed to live decent lives after their release. This sharing leads to a 
conversation about the unhealthy relationship that many police officers have with 
the Black community, including how police have systemically targeted Black 
people as criminals. Yala explores the criminal justice system and police brutality 
that many Black people experience through civics.

Yala is aware of the impact of racist incidents on students’ quality of 
safety and health and is concerned for her students’ socioemotional well-being. 
During an interview, Yala explained, “By the time they get to me, sis, they so beat 
up, where they think they don't have any options but the streets” (Yala, personal 
communication, September 6, 2019). Yala attempted to “educate to liberate” and 
return students to their “traditional greatness” (“Black Scholars Academy,” n.d.) 
by teaching Black cultural lessons to motivate them to value their education and, 
specifically, read above grade level. During a classroom observation, Yala 
explained the importance of education, especially reading for Black boys. Yala 
read aloud a news article about the low reading levels of 8th grade Black males 
on a national and local level. Without an established familial relationship between 
the teacher and students, this article could have been received wrong or without a 
full understanding in motivating students to see the power and influence of 
education in combating pervasive racism, including the mass incarceration of 
Black boys that correlates with low reading scores. However, through familial 
relationships, the choice of the article demonstrates how the teacher and students 
are connected and responsible for educating to liberate.
Yala’s familial approach to teaching is a method of racial protectionism as she is preparing students for a racist American society in the classroom of this homeschool collective. A benefit of familial relationships is that the teacher takes accountability and responsibility in preparing and protecting Black students who have been historically marginalized and disenfranchised. As a surrogate parent or parental figure, Yala attempts to prepare and protect students for a racist world that views Black people, especially men, as violent and criminals. Through these critical conversations and lessons, students become aware of systemic racism, allowing them to challenge it.

**Rising Meeting**

Familial relationships are significant to the practice of Rising Meeting, a daily ritual at the beginning of the school day where Yala and students engage in culturally affirming recitations that lead into learning opportunities extending beyond Black history lessons to traditions that could be practiced on a daily basis. The *Oath to Our Ancestors*, the visible symbol of the *African Flag*, and the *Nguzo Saba* or the Seven Principles of *Kwanzaa*—previously described earlier in this chapter of personal and collective responsibilities—to build community at this homeschool collective. Students practice these physical artifacts and affirmations as a part of the vision and mission of the homeschool collective in achieving its objective to educate to liberate and restore students to their traditional greatness. BSA students are not indoctrinated to a national identity but rather their African Ancestry. The rituals at BSA are symbolical of togetherness, cohesion, unity, and nationhood.
During an observation of Rising Meeting, the teacher and students recited the *Oath to Our Ancestors* while facing the African Flag or Pan-African Flag. Marcus Garvey designed this red, black, and green flag in 1920 as an expression and symbol of Black liberation. The Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag is a doctrine practiced in many public and private schools. During this custom, teachers and students stand and speak in unison to symbolize their American national identity. On the other hand, BSA replaced that ritual with African Flag or Pan-African Flag and the recitation of the *Oath to Our Ancestors* as a daily morning ritual. During a classroom lesson, Yala explained the colors and meanings of the flag to students:

Red—blood for the struggle…Black—our color; our people. A lot of people don’t know that in Egypt, in Kemet, the land is actually Black! That’s actually what it symbolizes… Melanin is Black… the Black land…
Green—hope, grass, progress—Hope (Yala, Classroom Observation, September 5, 2019).

The recognition of the African flag is a way for Yala and her students to connect to their African heritage and roots. In this way, the African flag was a visual that symbolized and helped to establish cultural pride and African nationhood among the teacher and students.

Rising Meeting is a morning ritual or daily practice at the beginning of the school day. At this time, the teacher and students participate in a community-centered recitation. This recitation interconnects with the teaching of *OurStory* and the recitation of the *Oath to Our Ancestors*. Dr. Ray Hagins (a.k.a. Sa Ra Ankhote Maakheru Setep En Ra), the National Chief Elder & Spiritual Leader of The Afrikan Village & Cultural Center—an “African-
centered, Scripture-based ministry of Excellence” (About, The African Village, 2017), wrote the Oath. During an observation of Rising Meeting, Yala emphasized Black history, focusing on African ancestors and their contributions to the world and civilization.

During an observation of Rising Meeting, Yala taught Black history, focusing on African ancestors and their contributions to the world and civilization. She referenced the Oath to Our Ancestors that helped generate conversation about Black history. This Afrocentric poem and text culturally affirm, validate, and honor African ancestors for their sacrifices and contributions to the world. African people, recognized as inventors and intellectuals, are celebrated as the first contributors to civilization through their work in mathematics and science. Yala emphasized the contributions of African people to the building of pyramids and the study of astrology. Black history lessons, interwoven throughout all aspects of this homeschool collective, reveal Afrocentricity.

During an observation of Rising Meeting, Yala affirmed the cultural greatness in her students by teaching the students the words and importance of the recitation that promotes the traditional greatness of African ancestors as a model of Black excellence. During the Oath recitation, Yala emphasized values in the poem, such as “Our African Ancestors who brought science into the world” and “Our African Ancestors who brought civilization to the world.” Yala uses the Oath to Our Ancestors to remind students of their “traditional greatness.” During an observation, Yala explained, “Our ancestors were big on astronomy. What was
the first calendar? The sun and the moon… Who started mathematics? Our African ancestors” (Classroom Observation, October 9, 2019). This *Oath* emphasizes the purpose of this homeschool collective in liberating and promoting greatness in students to recognize people who contributed to the world before they died, leaving a legacy for their descendants.

A value of family and kinship are present in the veneration of African ancestors whose legacy and contributions reflect their “greatness” as exemplars for African descendants to continue in that “traditional greatness,” as illuminated in this *Oath* and BSA’s mission, vision, and goals. This purpose was reflected during a classroom observation when Yala explained, “If we get to our babies early, before it’s ingrained into them that they're nothin', that they came from slaves. We built the pyramids. That's us. People that look like us, that knew math and science.” Furthermore, Yala explained:

> You know we want to talk about and brag about our ancestors building the pyramids. Well, to do that, you got to know math and science… In order to build the pyramids, you have to know geometry. In order for us to rule again, we got to know math and science! (Yala, Interview, September 5, 2019)

Yala leverages ancestor contributions throughout history as models of greatness for students to live by at this homeschool collective. Yala’s choice to share the greatness of African ancestors aims to “liberate” and help students see their inherent intellectual abilities and potential to acquire one’s “traditional greatness” through the lives of their African ancestors as a method of racial protectionism. During an interview, Yala explained, “They [students] need to see our ancestors as being great… Give respect for our ancestors. If it wasn't for them, we wouldn’t
be who we are today.” Rising Meeting creates an opportunity to further extend Black history lessons to empower students through African ancestors positioned as role models, mentors, moral icons, and “national heroes” (Mbiti, 1990).

The greatness of ancestors is the same greatness that Black people today, including students, still possess. Students connect Black history lessons through *Our Story* and Rising Meeting to build their appreciation for their African heritage. A familial orientation at this homeschool collective allows the teacher and students to connect the legacy of African ancestors with the work that African descendants must continue to do in order to reach liberation and restore one’s traditional greatness. Based on an analysis of data collected for this dissertation, the purpose of BSA is to recognize the damage of the miseducation of Black students and to return them to their “traditional greatness.” This mission is a cohesive message to students and their families that this homeschool collective is designed to educate and liberate the student through curriculum and instruction that meets their academic and cultural needs.

**The Benefits of Familial Relationships at BSA**

Interviews and the snapshots of classroom observations of Afrocentric curriculum and instruction prove that familial relationships—described in the classroom as African time orientation, a personalized learning plan, the teaching of *Our Story*, and the practice of Rising Meeting—are beneficial to students. According to teacher and student interviews and classroom observations, the Afrocentric features that Yala enacted at this homeschool collective helped students develop cultural pride, agency, self-determination, and independence.
BSA students benefited from familial relationships in four ways. First, they established a joy for school. Second, they improved academically and behaviorally. Third, they developed self-confidence and self-worth. And finally, they felt safe and protected.

**Established a Joy for School**

Yala helped students have an enjoyable learning experience through familial relationships, as expressed in student interviews. Flexible and personalized lessons and assignments have led students to increased interest and enjoyment in their education where there once was none. Mia explained that her homeschooling experience was better than her experience as a former public school student. Since attending this homeschool collective, Mia has acquired a newfound interest in school. Mia explained, “I actually want to come to school. I remember I used to wake up like, 'I don’t want to go.' I want to come to school now.”

Other BSA students like Wellington and Blair have enjoyed attending a homeschool collective compared to their previous public schools. According to Wellington, “I get home earlier than everybody. We get to do stuff on our time—that’s the big one that I like.” Furthermore, during interviews, several students described the homeschool collective as “fun” and “easier” than public school. For example, Wellington explained, “It’s really fun. It’s easier than public school. Yala modified and adapted the content and how she taught to fit the needs and interests of her students. Yala taught content lessons using scaffolding and
support that students needed and wanted to learn. This accommodation made for a fun and easy learning experience, as described by students.

Familial relationships between the teacher and students led students to have joy and appreciation for their teacher and their education. BSA students contrasted their relationship with Yala and their teachers at their previous schools. They had a positive relationship with Yala, but more of a negative experience with teachers at their past public and private schools. For example, prior to attending BSA, Mia explained during an interview that she had a negative relationship with her former public school teachers who never helped or listened to her. However, since Mia attended this homeschool collective, she described her educational experience as positive due to her relationship with her teacher. She explained, “Out of all the teachers… I’ve only liked four teachers out of my whole life.” She considered Yala one of her favorite teachers. Blair, another student, developed a relationship with his teacher and peers that he never had at his previous public school. He explained:

In the public school, I barely interacted with the teachers and the only time I interacted was when I had a question which I barely asked and here, I talk to Ms. Yala a lot more… I started to talk a lot more and started asking questions because I typically don’t ask a lot of questions—only if I am curious about it. (Blair, personal communication, October 10, 2019)

Blair’s realization of enjoyment of school is at the crux of personal growth and academic confidence as he begins to build and maintains a positive relationship with his teacher while becoming more comfortable in social situations.

**Improved Academically and Behaviorally**
Since attending this homeschool collective, BSA students have noticed a positive change in themselves including an improvement in their academics and behavior. According to Blair, while he attended public school, he struggled with math and science. Blair plans to continue his homeschool journey at home and at BSA until graduation. He explained, “I’m used to being homeschooled and know that I wouldn’t do well in public school… I was getting bad grades.”

However, since attending this homeschool collective, Blair confessed to feeling more confident as a student in the classroom because he has a community that supports him. Mia also noticed an improvement in her academic work since enrolling at BSA when she said:

> It’s gotten better. I still got some learning to do. It’s progressing. My math skills is progressing… I had a really hard time reading. I can actually read now. She makes us read aloud one-on-one and do reading logs and have to write about what we read. (Mia, personal communication, October 17, 2019)

During interviews, all BSA students expressed that they have seen an increase of interest in their education and improvement in their academics. While some students have witnessed an academic change, other students like Mia have experienced a behavioral and attitudinal change that her mother noticed. Mia explained:

> People say they have seen a change. My mama says I’m mature ever since I been here. I believe it's what I’ve been through, but I can't say being here didn’t help. I learned a lot of common sense here... I don’t react the same way with certain things that I used to. My attitude is different. I’m not straight off rude… I've become more calm and gained a lot of inner peace at this school. (Mia, personal communication, October 17, 2019)
Students are changing their perspectives about school and finding it a fun, easier, and enjoyable experience.

Although there was an initial challenge when Yala presented Black history truthfully in a way different than students previously learned, these lessons led students to become what Yala referred to as “believers” of OurStory. In a personal interview, Isis shared, “I didn’t think she [Yala] knew what she was talking about… We had a whole disagreement, and it took most of the class.” Isis challenged Yala’s teaching of OurStory, claiming that she was “lying.”

Despite initial hesitancy, after students developed a familial relationship, rapport, and trusting relationship, they eventually believed the truthful lessons about Black history during OurStory. This connection helped students better understand the information that she taught about Black history. Students believed her teachings and refrained from questioning the validity of her Afrocentric lessons. Familial relationships, including affection and nurturing, made students believers not just in education or the Afrocentric classroom but themselves and their future. While BSA students initially challenged OurStory lessons, they eventually acquired a newfound knowledge and respect for Black history provided by Yala and believed her accurate teachings.

Yala received acceptance from students or student buy-in. BSA students became interested in uncovering the truth about their Black history and culture, thus, taking it upon themselves to research the lessons and discover accurate information, increasing their knowledge and appreciation of Black history. For example, during a geography lesson focusing on the correct size of Africa and the
number of countries in Africa, one student, Isis, challenged the *OurStory* lessons that Yala taught. *OurStory* was unparalleled to the history that she learned while a former public and a private school student. This challenge is apparent during a classroom observation when Yala instructed the students to label ten countries in Africa on a map to demystify inaccuracies about Africa. However, Isis did not believe the lessons that Yala taught during *OurStory*. Yala explained during an interview that for many students, “This is their first time of hearing this, and it contradicts their whole paradigm.” It is evident that over time, as students conformed to a familial culture at this homeschool collective, according to Yala, they became believers of the truth about Black history during *OurStory* lessons and challenged previous inaccurate history lessons.

Cartographers distorted Africa to look smaller than Europe, leading to racist consequences. For example, one could superimpose 12 of the world’s major nations over the continent of Africa, and it still would not be fully covered. According to Kai Krause’s “The True Size of Africa” (2010), although the map is not an accurate pixilated version of the continent, it symbolizes its size. Bekerie (1994) writes, “The image that the map of Africa evokes, combined with epic memory, provides the foundation for African cultural identity for most diasporic African peoples” (p. 132). Taking it upon herself to explore the Black history that she was now interested in motivated Isis to research the accuracy of maps. During her research, Isis found an accurate map of the continent of Africa that spoke to the correct size of the continent that Yala taught during *OurStory*. This newfound
information convinced Isis that Yala told the truth about the size of the continent of Africa and its number of countries.

BSA students who learned truthful history through OurStory, like Isis, debunked myths about Africa. These myths focused on presenting factual information about the geography of Africa and African languages. First, Africa is a continent and not a country. Second, various ethnicities in Africa speak multiple languages. And, finally, the continent is larger than its scaled size on a majority of maps. Students like Isis are learning more about the interconnection between their lives and the legacies of their African ancestors. This newfound knowledge about truthful Black history and cultural narratives derives from familial relationships as a benefit at this homeschool collective. Eventually, Isis expressed an appreciation for Black history taught from an Afrocentric perspective. During an interview, Isis confessed:

I like it more here because she [Yala] tells us our part of the story as African American people instead of hearing it as the White people saying, ‘Oh they were just slaves.’ Like, ‘No, there’s more to it.’ Instead of hearing one side of the story, you hear both sides. (Isis, personal communication, November 8, 2019)

During an interview, Isis contrasted the Black history lessons that she learned at previous schools from OurStory. Isis explained, “It [OurStory] tells me about my past instead of hearing about Christopher Columbus came up with Thanksgiving when it’s not true.” Isis’s new knowledge dispels racist stereotypes, myths, and inaccuracies about African people and the continent. Isis said, “When we was doing OurStory, and we were talking about the Romans and how some of them were taking credit on our African ancestors… There’s been a lot of things
that I understand.” Mia agreed when she stated, “I know dang well that our oppressors didn’t come up with all that… I know White people didn’t come up with everything.” BSA students eventually became what Yala refers to as “believers,” disrupting their miseducation as previous public and private school students. As a result, familial relationships at this homeschool collective helped students to excel both academically and behaviorally, thus, positively impacting their self-confidence and self-worth.

Developed Self-Confidence and Self-Worth

A familial orientation helps students build trust, rapport, community, and confidence with the teacher and their peers. As students learn more about their history and culture, they develop their character and are more apt to succeed. BSA students witnessed a change in their self-confidence and self-worth to developing a familial relationship with the teacher and their peers and a sense of belonging that they did not previously have. BSA students had negative experiences at their former public and private schools. Mia described feeling “invisible” as a former public school student. This experience negatively impacted her self-esteem. In contrast to this invisibility, BSA is a homeschool collective where students’ lives are valued and celebrated in the classroom through a familial orientation that considers their academic needs and cultural interests with a personalized learning plan. BSA students expressed seeing a change in themselves that included the development of cultural pride that boosts self-confidence and self-worth. Another student, Isis, explained that after learning about Black history during OurStory lessons, it “Makes me feel proud because I know a lot about my
African ancestors that I didn’t before.” Research proves that Black students develop cultural pride when they learn about their history (Akoto & Akoto, 1999; Shockley et al., 2015; Shockley & Frederick, 2010). Yala explained:

The number one thing that I want them to take away—just to know their worth. Knowledge of self, and to know that they’re great, and to know that you don't have to be like everybody else. You were born for a purpose. Use your gifts that the Creator gave you. (Yala, personal communication, September 6, 2019).

Yala’s Afrocentric teaching methods and lessons have influenced BSA students’ lives. According to student interviews, a familial relationship where other aspects of Afrocentric education were present led students to develop cultural pride, self-confidence, and self-worth. Blair spoke to this when he explained his increased self-confidence since attending this homeschool collective. Blair explained, “I felt like I didn’t fit in at public school because I barely talked to people in class. I basically just sat and answered questions. Here, I’m able to make a lot more friends and be active.” Blair’s newfound joy for his education led him to say that what he was learning “makes me feel good.”

Another student, Wellington, also acknowledged a change in himself when he said that BSA makes him happier and “alive.” He admitted to feeling a sense of belonging at BSA that he had not felt previously at a public school. Wellington explained, “I feel like I fit in… I feel like people care about me.” Afrocentric features in teaching at BSA, including familial relationships, are impactful to students’ lives.

Mia also struggled with feeling as though she didn’t belong while in her former public school. Feelings of insecurity and social anxiety were ramifications
of previous schooling experiences. However, since attending BSA, her confidence has drastically increased. She explained, “If I have a question or need anything, I can just come to her [Yala] about it. Some teachers in JCPS, you can’t talk about nothing.” Yala’s component of Afrocentricity in her teaching style encourages students to develop self-worth and confidence. According to Yala, her goal is, “I want my babies to be confident and loved.” BSA has proven to be a homeschool collective where students are supported, validated, and celebrated.

Another benefit of familial relationships is visible in the extended discussion of critical conversations that emerge from *OurStory* lessons. These lessons revealed an increase in students’ confidence in knowing the truth about their cultural history. The teacher and students comfortably discussed issues that impacted their lives and people from their culture because they had the same cultural backgrounds. In educational spaces like this homeschool collective, an Afrocentric theoretical framework encourages the teaching of Black history and culture and challenges anti-Black perspectives across curriculum and instruction. Without an established familial relationship between the teacher and students at this homeschool collective, these critical conversations would not have been as enriching.

**A Safe and Protective Space**

According to interviews, many BSA students experienced school violence, such as peer bullying, school fights, and racism at previous public and private schools. However, once they attended BSA, they were not confronted with this issue or concern. An established familial relationship between the teacher and
students was the difference. This relationship offered a safe and protective learning environment for students that were not reflective of BSA students' previous experiences with school violence in any of its manifestations. During an interview, Mia explained, “Here, it [bullying] honestly wouldn’t really happen.” Yala alludes to the nature of the familial relationship and how it supports a kinship-oriented environment. Afrocentric schools, like BSA, promotes nonviolence that supports the academic and cultural development of Black students. As intended, a familial relationship teaches students that school is not a place for violence or “negative sanctions for belittling, humiliating and embarrassing others” (Foster, 1994, p. 235).

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the development and benefits of familial relationships in the classroom setting at BSA. Many schools across the country avoid, dismiss, and disregard controversial topics that could lead to critical conversations in the classroom to prevent discomfort. However, BSA promotes familial relationships that welcome, acknowledge, and accept these learning experiences. Familial relationships influence Yala’s curricular choices and instructional practices at this homeschool collective. Yala establishes trust and a healthy rapport with students in a kinship-oriented environment, promoting an Afrocentric perspective that considers, addresses, and meets the students’ educational needs and cultural needs interests. This respect for and support of familial relationships through shared experiences during Our Story and critical
conversations linked historical issues with current-day issues such as racism. Thus, students cultivated a sense of belonging over time at BSA.

Chapter 6 provides the summary and conclusion of this dissertation. Aspects of familial relationships, including the outcomes of this choice at this homeschool collective, and recommendations for educators in all educational settings, are provided.
CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Only a fool would let their enemy teach their children. – Malcolm X

This chapter summarizes the results and findings of this dissertation and recommends familial relationships in curricular choices and instructional practices to educators. This dissertation explores the evolution of Black Scholars Academy (BSA). BSA started as an Afrocentric homeschool collective, transformed into a Black Panther School, and returned to an Afrocentric homeschool collective. This study consisted of data gathered from teacher and student interviews and classroom observations during the 2019-2020 school year (July 2019 to November 2019). The data analyzed were comprised of participant interviews of Yala and her students, six full days of classroom observations, and textual artifacts such instructional materials and content on the website.

In August 2019, two months before the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, I conducted two formal interviews with Yala on two consecutive days from September 5th through September 6th. Interviews were approximately 1 to 1.5 hours in length. I also spoke with Yala conversationally during classroom observations. I conducted six full days of classroom observations for one month from October 2019 to November 2019 (specifically October 9, October 10, October 16, October 17, November 7, and November 8). I also scheduled three
days— October 10, October 17, and November 8— to conduct interviews with four individual students that lasted approximately 40-minutes to one hour. Classroom observations lasted four hours, the approximate length of one full school day at this homeschool collective. Consequently, I present snapshots of brief classroom observations rather than an in-depth, full, or complete picture of daily life at BSA. The following research questions guided this dissertation:

1. What salient features are present in the curriculum and instruction at BSA?
2. How were familial relationships beneficial to the Afrocentric vision, mission, and goals of this homeschool collective?
3. How did familial relationships influence the curricular choices and instructional practices at BSA?
4. How does familial relationships, as an Afrocentric feature, educate to liberate and return students to their traditional greatness?

An Afrocentric theoretical framework guides this dissertation as it supports familial relationships between persons, whether there is biological or extended kinship. Familial relationships are present in Yala’s curricular and instructional choices, including her interactions and engagements with students that also influenced how students engaged with each other. In analyzing triangulated data, familial relationships, present in Yala’s curricular and instructional choices, are the most salient Afrocentric feature at BSA.

As described in chapter 5, teacher and student interviews and the snapshots of classroom observations of the Afrocentric features that Yala enacted at this homeschool collective— an African time orientation, a personalized learning plan, the teaching of OurStory, and the practice of Rising Meeting— are beneficial to BSA students in four ways. BSA students (a) established a joy for
school; (b) improved academically and behaviorally; (c) developed self-confidence and self-worth, and (d) felt safe and protected. This homeschool collective aims to “educate to liberate” and encourage students to achieve their “traditional greatness” as a method of racial protectionism. The employment of Afrocentricity as best practices in a homeschool collective is considered in this dissertation to inform the education field.

Limitations

BSA features Afrocentric elements in the curriculum and instruction. However, these elements are not all-encompassing of Afrocentric education but typical of any Black teacher with cultural pride. Since I was not present for every learning opportunity at this homeschool collective, I am unable to make conclusions beyond this limited data set. Although, had I spent more time observing this homeschool collective, I would have noticed additional themes and patterns in the data at BSA.

Despite this limitation, this Afrocentric homeschool collective was similar to other Afrocentric schools across the country. After evaluating a set of identified Afrocentric schools, four common features of Afrocentricity were present, including (a) the teaching of OurStory or Black history, (b) the practice of Afrocentric rituals, (c) holistic education, and (d) the presence of predominately Black teachers (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013; Johnson, 2016; Mazama, 2012, 2015; Tenney, 2012). First, Afrocentric schools teach Black history from a Black cultural perspective. These lessons, including the teaching of OurStory, promote accurate narratives about the Black experience, interlinking historic and
contemporary issues impacting Black people. Second, Afrocentric schools use African storytelling practices, call-and-response techniques, poetry, drumming, music, and proverbs throughout the curriculum. Rituals, such as the practice of Rising Meeting or a similar morning ritual, can also be a feature of an Afrocentric school. Third, Afrocentric schools promote holistic education through student choice such as the development of personalized learning plans that are flexible and accommodating to students who often have a specialization in entrepreneurship (Fields-Smith & Kisura, 2013). Finally, Afrocentric schools are comprised of predominately Black teachers who serve as role models and mentors to Black students (Teasley et al., 2016).

**Findings: The Development and Benefits of Familial Relationships**

As discussed by teachers, during the time when BSA was a Black Panther School, the authoritarian instructional approach was problematic. As described in chapter 4, authoritarianism led to conflict, dissatisfaction, and a decreased student population. An authoritarian instructional approach is the least effective teaching style as it does not lead to fewer behavior problems among students (Querido et al., 2002). When BSA was a Black Panther School, an authoritarian instructional approach was present through a former teacher, Quinn, whose style of teaching led to discord between a parent of a student who removed their child from BSA. This conflict suggests that the authoritarian instructional approach is ineffective in reinforcing positive behaviors among students. After Yala returned BSA to its original Afrocentric tradition and didn’t rehire the two former teachers, the authoritarian instructional approach that Quinn previously enacted was no longer
present. Instead, Yala’s authoritative, rather than authoritarian instructional approach, effectively engaged students at BSA. As observed in chapter 5, an authoritative instructional approach, with its warm demanders and high expectations, was most effective at this homeschool collective.

While the presence of affection is often absent between teachers and students at many public and private schools, this is not the case for students at this homeschool collective. Familial relationships, a component of the curriculum and instruction at BSA, are representative of a kinship environment and an authoritative teaching approach. Familial relationships were apparent in the use of physical affection, kinship roles, and peer-as-sibling relationships. A familial connection is valuable in an Afrocentric classroom where a shared or common culture, trust, and rapport exists between the teacher and students. Establishing a rapport between the teacher and students allows teachers like Yala to teach students from a cultural perspective that considers, addresses, and meets students’ needs.

With familial relationships as central to this homeschool collective, Yala’s curricular and instructional choices reflect the value of a family that intends to support learning in a home-like space. As described in chapter 5, Yala displayed physical affection towards students when she hugged students, kissed a student on the cheek, and stood near students as a guide and support as they completed class assignments. She also used verbal affirmations to promote kinship between her, students, and their families, with words like “son,” “sis,” and taking on a motherly role for the students. Yala’s intention to create a familial, warm, nurturing, and
protective environment, are the goals of Afrocentric schools (Fields-Smith & Wells Kisura, 2013). Familial relationships are beneficial in helping the teacher and students feel respected, supported, present, valued, and affirmed in the educational environment. In the context of this homeschool collective, the development and sustaining of familial relationships are imperative to the Afrocentric educational environment where students are accepted for who they are.

The development of a familial relationship between the teacher and students allowed Yala to implement African time orientation and a personalized learning plan during the teaching of *Our Story* and the practice of Rising Meeting at this homeschool collective. African time orientation revealed a level of respect for her students and their families. As a result, she learned about and consulted with her students to develop a personalized learning plan to accommodate her students' educational needs and cultural interests. Yala considered the personal circumstances of students and their families. She valued natural timing in completing assignments and placed a high regard for producing quality work over the quantity of work. For example, Yala provided students additional time to complete their work. This level of respect is also visible in how she leveraged student choice in the classroom. Students are allowed to explore their cultural interests in connection to geography. For example, student choice is visible during a geography lesson when Isis discussed Nipsey Hustle's life and legacy. Blair was also allowed to learn about entrepreneurship throughout the day as his personalized learning plan. Both examples of personalized learning plans reveal
that Yala built a familial relationship with students and their families, as illustrated in chapter 5.

With a familial relationship, BSA teachers had good intentions to establish a rapport with and encourage students to feel like a family while learning the truth about Black history to “educate to liberate” and return students to their “traditional greatness.” However, these truthful OurStory or Black history lessons were initially questioned by and problematic for students which led to conflict. OurStory lessons did not reflect previously learned and inaccurate American history lessons that promoted myths about Africa and its people, beginning with slavery. This miseducation has negatively impacted Black students’ self-esteem, self-image, and self-worth (Asante, 1991; Loewen, 2011; Lomotey, 1978). To combat this miseducation, Yala intends to teach the truth. As a result, after students attended BSA for a few weeks, they eventually conformed to and accepted OurStory lessons as truthful.

In many Afrocentric schools, Afrocentric features are present in the Black cultural pride in the content and lessons, a connection to familial or kinship ties, and the need to learn the truth about Black history while challenging inaccurate history learned in previous public and private schools. These are all features of an independent Black school with Afrocentric features (Lee, 1992). The Afrocentric features at this homeschool collective impacted students' lives in three ways. First, students acquired critical thinking skills to question Black history taught from a Western worldview and Western culture. Second, students gained newfound knowledge encouraging them to appreciate and believe the accurate narratives of
Black history and culture which affected their self-esteem and self-image by helping them to “know thyself.” Students developed self-confidence after learning the truth about their history. Third, students began to identify as independent researchers in the quest for an accurate narrative of their Black history.

Black students educated from an Afrocentric perspective develop Black identity, pride, and excellence (Gay, 2010; Lee, 1992). At BSA, knowledge of self or self-knowledge is a prerequisite to redemption and liberation. Yala teaches OurStory, encouraging students to build their self-confidence and self-esteem through culturally relevant content and cultural representation. Yala intends for her students to acquire a “knowledge of self” and “self-worth” during OurStory. Karenga (2008) explained the importance of self-knowledge from Marcus Garvey’s perspective: “Garvey’s stress on ‘know thyself’ is always a knowing oneself in the context of community and through the community. In a word, self-understanding requires and reflects an understanding of oneself as a member of a community” (p. 187). Karenga (2008) further explained, “A person or a people must know themselves to produce themselves, that is, bring themselves into being, in this case as a free, proud, and productive people” (p. 181). Yala further explained:

Just mostly their [students’] self-worth and their self-confidence have soared, sis. Remember I also am a holistic educator… I want them to be happy and confident because when you're confident, you wanna learn. You're more enthusiastic. Plus, I want lifelong learners. (Yala, personal communication, September 6, 2019)
Based on the classroom observations and interviews with the current teacher and students, the teaching of *OurStory* and the practice of *Rising Meeting* positively impacted students' learning outcomes.

Familial relationships are also significant to the practice of *Rising Meeting*, a daily ritual at the beginning of the school day. Yala and students engaged in culturally affirming recitations, such as the *Oath to Our Ancestors*, to help build community among the teacher and students at this homeschool collective. During this recitation, a familial relationship is present in the veneration of African ancestors. Their legacy and historical contributions reflect their "liberation" and “greatness” as exemplars for African descendants to strive for the same liberation and greatness.

**Recommendations: Problems, Promises, and Possibilities**

**Problems: Financial and Pedagogical**

Several financial and pedagogical shortfalls of Afrocentric education led to instability at BSA. Yala had limited resources as the only teacher after the homeschool collective transformed from a Black Panther School into its original Afrocentric iteration. Several financial and pedagogical shortfalls of Afrocentric education led to instability at BSA. The survival of a school is nearly impossible without a stable space, student and teacher population, and philosophy.

This homeschool collective needed stable financial resources for a consistent teacher income. Financial security could have also helped offer a permanent location for the homeschool collective. The reality that finances were an issue prohibited Yala from securing a place to operate her school. As a result,
she was in a temporary space located in a public library that caused her to constantly move her school and its curriculum to a space that she was not in control of. Yala experienced another barrier due to her informal hiring process. One of her teachers promoted authoritarianism which was unanticipated. Yala could have hired teachers who shared the same authoritative teaching approach. She could have also developed a more rigorous financial plan that established and maintained a stable location and economic security for the payment of teachers. However, this was not the case. As a result, BSA underwent philosophical and financial complications, as any school would under the same circumstances. If I could have done this study over, I would have researched this homeschool over at least one year, collected student work samples and more instructional materials, and interviewed students’ families. This additional data would have allowed me to learn more about the structure, curriculum, instruction, and experiences of research participants at this homeschool collective.

**Promises: Black Culture and Afrocentric Features**

A school is Afrocentric in the way that it is structured and how the content is taught. Educational features at BSA were reflective of Black culture and Afrocentricity. As mentioned in chapter 5, although identified as Afrocentric by its founder and principal teacher, the curriculum and instructional methods discussed during interviews and observations are not all-encompassing of Afrocentricity, but Black culture, in general. This school has elements of Afrocentricity but not all. Some aspects of this homeschool collective, embedded in Black culture, are common among Black teachers, including teaching the
importance of learning Black history, honoring ancestors, practicing Black
cultural traditions, and uplifting the Black community through entrepreneurship.
Some uniquely Afrocentric instructional practices that Yala used were apparent in
her identity, curricular choices, and instructional practices. The dimensions of
Afrocentricity at BSA include a focus on an African time orientation, a
personalized learning plan, the teaching of OurStory, and the practice of Rising
Meeting.

**Possibilities: Moving Forward**

Although some structural and curricular components of BSA are partially
or not entirely Afrocentric, this fact does not diminish the feature of
Afrocentricity that is found at this homeschool collective. Rather, it justifies that
just because an educational center is considered Afrocentric, does not mean that
this particular philosophy or framework is "complete" or an adequate Afrocentric
experience.

Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic during the 2020-2021 school year,
I stopped following Yala at BSA. However, I wonder how things have changed as
Yala endured external conflicts that affected the way she taught and operated her
Afrocentric homeschool collective. These struggles provide evidence that there
are certain factors— financial and pedagogical— required to successfully operate
a school. Despite BSA’s shortcomings, this Afrocentric homeschool collective is
an example of an agentic, self-determined, and independent Black community.

This study calls for further research on the distinction between Afrocentric
practices and Black cultural practices in education as different angles of a cultural
framework. In addition, other themes found at this homeschool collective were not necessarily features of Afrocentricity, but representative of Black culture. During the data analysis, I was conflicted between whether or not this homeschool collective was Afrocentric as self-identified because there were also features of Black culture that were present. However, since I was present in a compact period of a week at one point in time, I don’t have an in-depth portrait of this homeschool collective. However, these themes are examined primarily from the brief classroom observations and limited teacher and student interviews.

Based on findings in this study, this dissertation recommends that teachers consider and implement components of Afrocentric education consisting of best practices to educate students of culturally diverse backgrounds, especially Black students. Afrocentric features, including the promotion of familial relationships, are practiced by culturally diverse teachers, many of whom, have never considered themselves Afrocentric.

**Final Reflections**

Historically, Black people have consistently desired literacy but were denied an equitable education. As a response, they created schooling options to educate and protect their children in a subversive act against racism and a method of racial protectionism (Anderson, 1988; Jayawardene, 2015). The contemporary efforts of Black people creating educational opportunities for themselves, continue in the legacy of independent Black schools as a response to culturally limiting and exclusive schools.
The evidence of Afrocentric features at this homeschool collective reveals that Yala's strategy “to educate to liberate” and return students to their “traditional greatness” works. Afrocentric features at this homeschool collective are designed to help equip Black students to develop agency, self-determination, and independence. Yala intended to use her Afrocentric homeschool collective as a method of racial protectionism, similar to the motives of other Black homeschoolers across the country (Mazama, 2012, 2015). Afrocentric education, beneficial to Black students who develop a positive Black identity, challenges institutional racism, promotes the political and economic empowerment of the Black community, helps to close the academic achievement gap, and improves the educational and cultural development of Black students (Asante, 1991; Durden, 2007; Giddings, 2001; Harper, 2007; Hilliard, 1997; Lee, 1992; Love, 2019).

Like the historical legacy of Black education, independent Black schools combated racism. Racism is the most salient motivation to homeschool Black students in literature and at BSA (Mazama, 2012, 2015a, 2015b). As discussed in chapter 4, school violence, including racism, was a factor that led Yala and her students on their homeschooling journey, including the mission, vision, and goal to “educate to liberate” and to return students to their “traditional greatness.” Yala was motivated to establish an Afrocentric homeschool collective after experiencing cultural misunderstandings around her teaching style and blatant racial discrimination as a former public and private school teacher. BSA students were motivated to attend a homeschool collective after experiencing school violence, including peer bullying and racism at former public and private schools.
Consequently, the data collected for this study did not reveal incidents of bullying or violence at BSA due to the absence of racism.

While this dissertation highlights the historical issues concerning public and private schools in the U.S., everyone’s experience is different. This dissertation does not seek to portray public and private schools as entirely problematic for Black students. It also does not romanticize Afrocentric education, as it is not always the best alternative for students nor one of the many ways to educate Black students successfully. Today, this debate of the most effective strategies or the best way to teach Black students is still ongoing. However, the question becomes whether Black students, or students of any cultural background for that matter, require nurturing or protection. Black schools, like BSA, incorporating Black history into its curriculum, positively impact the Black students’ self-knowledge and self-esteem (Mazama, 2015a, 2015b; Mazama & Lundy, 2015; Richards, 2016; Slife, 2011). Many Black teachers like Yala are trying to, as Black Civil Rights leader and Children’s advocate Marian Wright Edelman explains, “teach our children our history so that they can gain confidence, self-reliance, and courage” (Edelman, 2007).

This dissertation contextualizes and contributes to a body of literature on race and Black educational options in the U.S., focusing on the history of independent Black schools, Afrocentric education, and the conditions of Black people who have educated themselves despite racism. This dissertation provides an analysis of and argues that Afrocentric education is culturally appropriate in educating and protecting Black students (Shockley et al., 2015). Afrocentric
schools, like BSA, reflect the Black community’s agency, self-determination, and independence to start their schools to define themselves and acquire education for their advancement (Foster, 1992; King, 1994; Lee, 1992; Lomotey, 1992; Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987).

This dissertation recommends that teachers use culturally inclusive curriculum and instruction, such as Afrocentric education, to educate culturally diverse students, especially Black students, in all educational contexts. The benefits and best practices of Afrocentric education in the ways Black students learn and Black teachers instruct are racially protective in promoting cultural pride, agency, self-determination, independence, liberation through education, and a return to their traditional greatness, as considered in this dissertation, thus, further informing the education field. Afrocentric features in curriculum and instruction are beneficial to students in any educational setting, whether public, private, parochial, charter, or homeschool.
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APPENDICES

Afrocentric Education in Public, Charter, and Homeschools

Afrocentric Public and Charter Schools. First, Ember Charter Schools, located in Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, New York, is a solution for families who are concerned with their children’s and academic and cultural progress. This culturally diverse school consists of 2/3 Black and 1/3 Latinx. As a culturally responsive school that focuses on mindful education, Ember offers an empowering Afrocentric curriculum. Cultural diversity in the student population that is inclusive of 40 nations represented makes this school focused on cultures throughout the Diaspora. This reveals that the teachers are models of what they are teaching—Afrocentric and culturally responsive education. The school uniform is typical of a traditional public school with general colors rather than a cultural focus. However, teachers and administrators wear clothing that is reflective of Afrocentricity in the hand wrap, jewelry, and attire that represents traditional or modern versions of African clothing.

Family Meeting is held once a day to engage students and teachers in a call-and-response style chant that serves as a morning ritual. This pep-rally style engagement that include affirmations like “I love myself,” intends to build a familial community and culture among the students and teachers which is an Afrocentric practice. Ember facilitates Art Share, a time when students intersect art with activism during a student presentation once a week. The history and contributions of Black influential leaders such as Harriet Tubman, Marcus Garvey, and Thelonious Monk are often highlighted throughout lessons for
cultural representation. Student work samples are presented throughout the classroom space to celebrate the cultural diversity of and pride in students. This school that focuses on providing a holistic education with a focus on socio-emotional health and wellness identified in Kiswahili as *Uhuru Ashe. Uhuru* means Freedom. *Ashe*, another word for Amen, translates into “It is so.”

Ember culturally affirms and validates students while nurturing student agency, character building, leadership, critical thinking skills, and social justice (Shapiro, 2019). Ember is not recognized as a school but a human development organization that addresses institutional and systemic racism in the Black community. Teachers who are considered, human development practitioners, are responsible for helping students to acquire self-empowerment, self-love, self-esteem, and cultural pride.

Second, Nairobi Day School in East Palo Alto, California, opened in 1966 and closed in 1984, taught African indigenous languages and the arts for students to develop an understanding of and appreciation for their African history, heritage, culture, and language (Durden, 2007; Hoover, 1992). The name of this school is a Maasai phrase that derives from Kenya.

Third, New Concept Development Center, located in Chicago, Illinois, is an Afrocentric school was established in 1969. Since its inception, this Center has transformed into a school, educational resource, summer camp, parent study group, food co-op, library, and an extended day care program, among other commitments. This Afrocentric school that is concerned with the academic and cultural development of students, embodies holistic education. Its core subjects
are reflective of the general requirements that students are expected to complete with a focus on Black culture. New Concept is guided by the Nguzo Saba or Kwanzaa principles. According to a case study on this school, an investigative science lesson on the interconnection in human life, relationships, and the universe revealed the presence of the Kwanzaa principles Nia or purpose and Umoja or unity during discussion. At this school, students graduate as the highest academically ranked students among their peers at surrounding schools and attend prestigious universities (Durden, 2007).

Fourth, J.S. Chick Elementary School, established in 1991 and closed in 2008, was an Afrocentric school in Kansas City, Missouri, that was advocated for by parents and educators to teach, celebrate, and honor Black contributions and excellence in the classroom (Durden, 2007). This school was 100 percent Black. The curriculum promoted Afrocentric education that promoted higher order thinking in connection to African ancestors from ancient Kemet. Durden (2007) described the Afrocentric curriculum at this school when he said that, “Teachers took the state standards of education and added mathematical methods of Imhotep and other ancient African scholars to their instructional lessons. The purpose of designing such lessons was to situate concepts into an Afrocentric framework” (Durden, 2007, p. 28). The success of this school that placed it as one of the top performing schools in the state led to the creation of another school, the final school described in this section. A similar school, Sanford B. Ladd was created in the image of Chick Elementary in 1995. At this Afrocentric school, the students
improved academically and culturally as they developed as leaders and contributors to their communities. (Durden, 2007; Teicher, 2006).

Fifth, the Betty Shabazz International Charter Schools— Barbara A. Sizemore Academy and Betty Shabazz Academy— located in Chicago, Illinois, are comprised of two campuses designed for Kindergarten through 8th-grade students. Founded by Dr. Carol D. Lee in 1998, Betty Shabazz International Charter Schools are independent Black or private schools that emerged into a community school and model of Afrocentric education (“Betty Shabazz International Charter Schools,” n.d.). These charter schools, initially established as a private Afrocentric independent school, later became a conversion school when it evolved into a public Afrocentric charter school. Since its conversion, it has more constraints. One of the constraints is visible in the presence of a traditional public school curriculum. Based on their online school schedule, both schools follow a traditional school schedule, covering core content that is labeled generally as Math, English/Language Arts (ELA), Science, and Social Studies across all grade levels. The traditional naming of subject matter is evidence that this school follows a general schedule that could be found in a traditional public or private school. However, it does not imply that the lessons are taught culturally exclusively. Actually, these two charter schools are representative of Afrocentricity.

Despite its general naming of the subjects, the schools name, uniform, and curriculum reveal an Afrocentric identity. The names of both charter schools are representative of influential and prominent Black women including Betty Shabazz
(also known as Betty X), Malcolm X’s wife, a Black educator and Civil Rights advocate, and Barbara A. Sizemore, a Black educator and researcher who is the first Black woman to head a public school system in a major city, Washington, D.C. Furthermore, the first item of the day across all grade levels is a “Culture SEL Check-in.” This check-in is similar to a Morning Meeting or Rising Meeting (the latter is the concept used throughout in this study) that one would find at the beginning of the day at a business or organizational team meeting to engage students and teachers in culturally affirming recitations.

“Morning Meeting” or “Rising Meeting,” a universally known concept and practiced routine with the same intention, is practiced across institutions as a 20 to 30-minute daily practice to help build community and belonging among its members. Morning Meeting often includes “verbal and nonverbal communication skills that are central to relationship building” (Bondy & Ketts, 2001, p. 144). Students gather in the classroom to reinforce classroom expectations. They focus on exercising social skills, building community, developing friendships, and establishing rules. Rising Meeting, comprised of four components, include a greeting, sharing, group activity, and morning message (Kriete, 1999; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2007). Rising Meeting and an African culture-inspired uniform consisting of dashikis and colors from the Pan-African flag are implemented to help promote an African-centered culture. Like many Afrocentric schools, both schools teach Black history or Our Story and focus on the development of the whole child. The Kwanzaa principles are also integrated into instruction (“Betty Shabazz International Charter Schools,” n.d.).
Sixth, the W. E. B. DuBois Academy, established in 2015, is an Afrocentric public school for all-boys of color in Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) located in Louisville, Kentucky. The majority of the teachers are of color who provide an Afrocentric and multicultural curriculum with a focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics). Their mission is to build strong relationships and develop their character. Students are identified as “Young Lions” or kings, which is an affirming as the symbol of the lion, represents courage as well as “leadership, perseverance, resilience, initiative, discipline and empathy” (“About,” W. E. B. DuBois Academy, n.d.). The students wear a school uniform complete with a vest, an emblem that symbolizes the school crest. This uniform does not reflect Afrocentricity. DuBois Academy incorporates a daily ritual including P.R.I.D.E. to further build the self-esteem of Black students.

Seventh, Carter G. Woodson Academy, located in Lexington, Kentucky, is one local and current example of an Afrocentric public school that was established to meet the academic and cultural needs of Black students. This Academy opened in the fall of 2012 in the Fayette County Public Schools and offered a rigorous curriculum taught “through the lens of African American history, culture and culturally responsive teaching and learning strategies” (Konz & Chatman, 2016). Woodson Academy is modeled after the “Black Males Working,” a private educational program for young Black males launched by Reverend C.B. Akins and his wife at their church, Lexington's First Baptist Church Bracktown, in 2005.
There have been many success stories revealing the positive impact of Afrocentric education on Black students (Lomotey & Ratteray 1990; Hilliard 2002; Constantine et al. 2006). According to Carol D. Lee’s study (1992), Afrocentric educations revealed that when Black students are educated from an African or African American cultural lens, they flourish.

**Afrocentric Homeschool Collectives.** The features of four Afrocentric homeschool collective are explored in this section. First, Kamali Academy, a homeschool collective located in New Orleans, Louisiana, focuses on “education for liberation.” This Afrocentric homeschool collective offers online class and curricular resources to various types of schools. Their main role is to assist homeschoolers throughout their journey as an educational and cultural resource. The mission of Kamali Academy is to help ease the concerns of homeschoolers and to provide a means to receiving coaching and training in order to be as successful as possible during the homeschooling journey.

Second, Urban Village Academy, founded by Aubrey “Walli” Williams and his mother, Deborah Boldt is an Afrocentric homeschool located in Atlanta, Georgia, that teaches students the value of knowing thyself. Urban Village Academy offers a global and hands-on curriculum that engages students with professional guest speakers. Students are learning Kiswahili, Black history, yoga/meditation, and martial arts. According to Williams, “Knowledge of self is the foundation of success” (Manyando, 2016). He further explained that “Being confidant about who you are comes from what you know about where you come from. It’s hard for parents to trust an educational institution that intentionally
omits the truth about our culture” (Manyando, 2016). Boldt further explained, “We assist and empower all African descendants in re-claiming their rightful heritage and pride by restoring and correcting the 20th century political version of African history and of Egypt and its people.” Although, this homeschool collective does not have a working website or domain that is accessible to receive additional information about its Afrocentric features, there is a considerate amount of information that is available through news articles to identify this collective as Afrocentric.

Third, Black Star Academy Home School Co-op in Birmingham, Alabama, is influenced by the work of Garvey. The theme of developing racial and cultural pride for the knowledge of self to teach others, is central and prominent throughout Afrocentric homeschools. Black Star Academy Homeschool Collective also incorporates Afrocentric and meditation into the curriculum to promote in the Black child, a sound mind, body, and spirit. (Holloway Talley, 2017a). In 2015, in Birmingham, Alabama, it was co-founded by Tremon and April Muhammad. This homeschool co-op is an Afrocentric homeschool collective, located in Birmingham, Alabama, focuses on the development of the whole child (Holloway Talley, 2017a). Uzuri Asad, a Black parent, educates her four children and other children throughout the community at an Afrocentric homeschool co-op in New Orleans, Louisiana. This homeschool also teaches the “Whole Child” and includes non-traditional lessons such as meditation, gardening, and agriculture (Fulmore, 2017; Holloway Talley, 2017a, Holloway Talley, 2017b). This homeschool co-op offers a culturally-centered
curriculum that emphasizes self-improvement for the development of the Black community and incorporates African-centered principles into its curriculum and instruction as its name is inspired by the prominent Black Star Line ship that was the first major Black enterprise in the United States led by Marcus Garvey (Holloway Talley, 2017b). African proverbs and Kemetic Yoga are also incorporated into the curriculum as an intentional, meditative, and holistic health practice to help ground the students and teachers or set the tone for the day (Holloway Talley, 2017b). This homeschool focuses on developing the Black student academically, but culturally with a celebration of African-centered holidays such as Kwanzaa (Holloway Talley, 2017b). Students are encouraged to be translingual by learning three languages in addition to English—Kiswahili, Spanish, and French for global commerce (Holloway Talley, 2017b).

Fourth, BlackStar Afrocentric Homeschool, located in New Orleans, Louisiana, and owned by Black businesswoman Tyehimba of BlackStar Books and Caffe, is inspired by the honorable Marcus Garvey, a Black nationalist who helped raise cultural pride in the Black community. Garvey also spearheaded the Back-to-Africa Movement with his passenger ship line, Black Star that sought to provide a transportation means for Black people in the United States to move to Africa. Garvey influenced many in the Black community, especially independent Black schools. Today, Black schools like the BlackStar Afrocentric Homeschool, have adopted an Afrocentric identity in its name and mission that draws upon key Black figures and their contributions to history. According to Tyehimba, “So
when we say, ‘Black Star,’ it refers to the development of the black child and also represents a kind of mental traveling to ‘know thyself’” (Worthy, 2018).

Fifth, Ujima: Children of the Sun Homeschool Collective was established by Kyna Clemons, a former senior U.S. Department of State staffer, and her husband, George, after they homeschooled all seven of their children in Prince George’s County, Maryland — the most affluent Black community in the United States located outside of Metro-D.C. They educate 10 families comprising a student population of 30 (Barras, 2015). Clemons consults text books found in public and private schools but prioritizes Afrocentric textbooks including the historical contributions of Black people.
BSA Student Profiles

This section provides background on the current BSA student participants interviewed in this dissertation. Individual profiles of student participants at BSA offer their past experiences as former public and private school students. According to interviews, participants were impacted negatively by school violence, including peer violence and racism. These incidents motivated their homeschooling journey as an educational option and a method of racial protectionism.

Mia

Mia, a 12th grader who attended BSA for two years, previously attended public school Pre-K through 9th grade, where she was a victim of peer bulling that led into a fight. Although this was her first and only offense and assault, Mia was suspended and placed in an alternative school. Mia compared her experiences across the public and alternative school that she attended and found that they were academically similar. She reported a violent school environment, an unchallenging curriculum, low teacher expectations, and abusive language among teachers. Mia explained, “I didn’t like the environment of the school. Everybody in the school had been to jail except for me… The teachers were rude. I just didn’t like it.” She “wasn’t learning anything.” A teacher also called her “retarded.”

Incidents of school violence led Mia to skip school that contributed to her falling behind academically. By the 2019-2020 school year, during which classroom observations were conducted for this study, Mia was six months pregnant with her first child. During classroom observation, Mia showed visible
signs of independence, self-determination, leadership, and motivation in completing her class assignments and homework.

**Blair**

Blair, a 10th grader, attended a public elementary school before being homeschooled for middle school. He experienced many struggles academically, particularly in math. By sixth grade, due to failing grades and bullying among peers, Blair and his mother decided to homeschool. According to Blair, he “always wanted to be homeschooled.” He was homeschooled full-time by his mother until he enrolled in BSA part-time, only attending the instructional days when the collective was held on Thursdays for six weeks (with one week off). Another reason he attended BSA, was for help with language arts, as his mother wanted additional instructional support. He also attended BSA for socialization purposes since the homeschool collective serves multiple families.

During classroom observations, Blair works quietly and supports his peers by helping with classwork. He shows independence and motivation as he completes assignments on his own without redirection. Blair has conformed to the expectations of the homeschool collective that encourages independence and leadership. Out of his peers, he is the only BSA student who identifies as an entrepreneur as indicated throughout this chapter.

**Isis**

Isis, a 9th grade student at BSA, identifies as biracial. Her mother is White, and her father is Black. She attended public school from kindergarten to fifth grade. However, due to behavior issues that involved fighting other students,
her parents placed her in a Seventh-day Adventist, private school for middle school. She also got a glimpse of a public high school the first week of the 2019-2020 school year before being homeschooled. During her 9th grade year, she was enrolled in two different public high schools. After a fight with a student who made a disrespectful joke about her mother, Isis was suspended from the first high school and the incident was placed on her behavior record. Isis states that she has been going through a difficult custody battle (between her mother and father). As a result, Isis felt threatened by the other student’s comments and reacted by fighting her. In retrospect, she explained how she later “regretted” fighting the girl, because she “was judged by teachers.” She self-reflected on the reason for her misbehavior, and said, “I was doing that because I wasn’t getting the attention that I wanted while going through custody.” Isis continued to experience a lack of success at the new school, as indicated by Isis. As a result, she enrolled into BSA.

Students such as Isis, enter school dealing with difficult issues that are not addressed in the public and private schools. However, due to the one-on-one nature of this homeschool collective, Isis was able to get the individualized attention that she needed to deal with issues at home such as the custody battle, and her mother being potentially incarcerated. She also received consistent counseling with a professional. According to Irvine (1989), “These teachers listen to the voices of their students, using their current concerns and even catastrophe events as opportunities to teach content knowledge as well as value” (p. 61). Isis has faced many personal struggles that are given more attention with a dominant voice in comparison to her peers as discussed later in this chapter.
Wellington

Wellington is a fifth grader who attended several public schools from kindergarten to fourth grade. Wellington was homeschooled due to pre-existing health conditions with diabetes that led to chronic absences and tardiness at the public school, as well as violent encounters with peers and teachers in public schools. While in public school, Wellington was often subjected to bullying that typically revolved around him being overweight.

In addition, Wellington heard report teacher’s abusing students. According to Wellington, his first-grade teacher—a White woman—was feared by students and had a reputation of verbally belittling and interacting violently with Black students. Wellington explained, “My first grade teacher was like abusive. One of my friends… told me that she choked out a kid.” According to Wellington, this teacher was eventually fired from the school. He further explained how he was abused by a gym teacher. Wellington explained, “The gym teacher… threw me across the floor. My arms were laid out and my face was on the floor. He lied and said that he didn’t do it.” Wellington also implied that he was bullied by peers at his former school who spread rumors about him. According to Wellington, “People were talking about me.” Towards the end of the 2018-2019 school year, Wellington was homeschooled as a fourth grade student at BSA.
Isis Tells a Personal Story in the Classroom

During an observed classroom learning event, Isis explained the personal matter about her mother’s fight with the law that could lead to a custody battle involving her parents and siblings. Yala and the other students listened silently as Isis spoke. The dialogue during this event is as follows:

Yala: “We’re going to go ahead and get started but family, let’s send love and light right now.”

Isis: “It’s going to affect him longer than any of us. That’s the only person he has. When the only parent you have gets taken away from you, of course it’s going to affect you really bad” and I know how he’s gonna be. He already acts out. He already fights. He’s already bringing fake guns to school. He’s already doing all of that and I know how he can act even worse.”

Yala: “But you know what you can do young Queen… You can change your reality. Don’t focus on the negative.”

Isis: “Two years without your mama…?”

Yala: “Baby don’t say that. If you say that then it’s gonna happen. You tell the universe, ‘Universe, you know I need my momma.’ Change it baby. That’s one thing that I’m just now learning. We can create our own reality and if you speak negative things then that’s what’s gonna happen baby, so you tell universe, ‘universe, you know I need my momma. My momma aint goin nowhere. My mama’s gonna be here.’ I’m telling you. If you focus on that negative, Isis—and this is the realist thing that I’m gonna tell you today baby. If you keep focusing on that negative, then that’s what’s gonna happen. If you keep telling yourself,” I aint gonna see my momma.” You aint gonna see her. Change it. Switch it up now, baby. I was not taught that. I was not taught that I was a goddess. That I create my own reality. Since I started thinking like a goddess, aye, I’ve been manifesting what I want baby. Come on. Don’t do it Isis. If you listen to anything I say, listen to that… Focus on the positive and what you want.”

Isis: “It’s like when everything starts going right in your life, somebody gotta mess everything up.”

Yala: “And guess what? Guess what? That’s what they’re in your life to do. To distract you and to keep you off your purpose. To keep you off your goal. Don’t let them. Can’t nobody control you. We give people power.
Don’t give them that much power, love. If it ain’t for you, it’s against you. That’s what I’m learning too. For real, for real. But it’s gonna be okay. It’s gonna be okay.” (Class Observation, personal communication, November 8, 2019)
CURRICULUM VITAE

Tytianna Nikia Maria Wells, PhD
Honey Tree Publishing
honeytreepublishingus@gmail.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Awarded</th>
<th>Major</th>
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<th>Years Attended</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</td>
<td>University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky</td>
<td>2015-2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Pan African Studies</td>
<td>University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky</td>
<td>2011-2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>English and Pan African Studies</td>
<td>University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky</td>
<td>2005-2009</td>
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**Dissertation**

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Michele Foster

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Tasha Tropp Laman, Dr. Dismas Masolo, and Dr. Shelley Thomas

**Faculty Appointments (University)**

**Adjunct Faculty,** History Department, Simmons College of Kentucky, Louisville, KY 40203 - August 2015 – December 2016. Course: African-American History 207A (Graduate Course)

**Adjunct Faculty,** Early Childhood Education, College of Education and Human Development, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292 – January 2015 – May 2015. Course: 320 Methods for Teaching Reading/ Language Arts P-5 (Undergraduate Course)

**Professional Work Experience**

**Founding Executive Director,** Kemper Academy for Teaching and Learning at The de Paul School, Louisville, KY 40205 – September 2021 – present

**Education Coordinator,** YouthBuild Louisville, Louisville, KY 40203 – September 2020 – September 2021

**Executive Director and Educator,** Summerworks, YouthBuild Louisville, Louisville, KY 40203 – July 2020 – September 2020


**Administrative Assistant,** Kentucky Reading Project, College of Education and Human Development, University of Louisville, KY 40292 – June 2015

**Contract Teacher and Artist,** Student Creative Writing & Book Publishing Program, Jefferson County Public Schools, Phillis Wheatley Elementary School, Louisville, KY 40210 – February 2016 - May 2016

**Contract Teacher and Artist,** California Neighborhood Creative Writing Workshop, California Community Center, Louisville, KY 40210 – October 2015 - April 2016

**Contract Teacher and Artist,** Student Creative Writing & Book Publishing Program, Jefferson County Public Schools, Phillis Wheatley Elementary School, Louisville, KY 40210 – January 2016 - present

### Additional Work Experience

- Professional Development (PD) for Teachers Session #2, Kentucky State University, Kentucky Reading Project (KRP), Frankfort, KY - June 2017

- Professional Development (PD) for Teachers Session #1, Kentucky State University, Kentucky Reading Project (KRP), Frankfort, KY - June 2017

- Business Concept and Design (Branding) Session, Soochow University, Suzhou, China - June 2017

- Student Creative Writing Program, Kentucky Refugee Ministries, Iroquois High School, Louisville, KY – May 2018

- Early Childhood Education, Family Literacy Program, Student Education Association, Ivy Tech Community College, Sellersburg, IN 47172 – November 2017

- Early Childhood Education, Family Literacy Program, Student Education Association, Ivy Tech Community College, Sellersburg, IN 47172 – June 2017

- Professional Development (PD) Session, Kentucky State University, Kentucky Reading Project (KRP), Frankfort, KY - June 2017

- Early Childhood Education, Family Literacy Program, Student Education Association, Ivy Tech Community College, Sellersburg, IN 47172 – April 2016

- Student Creative Writing & Book Publishing Program, Jefferson County Public Schools, Phillis Wheatley Elementary School, Louisville, KY 40210 – January 2016 - June 2016

- Culturally Responsive Teaching: Code-Switching, Professional Development, Jefferson County Public Schools, Diversity, Equity & Poverty Programs, Louisville, KY 40218 – April 2016

- Early Childhood Education, Teacher Preparation Program Course, Portland Elementary School, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292 – April 2016

- Early Childhood Education, Teacher Preparation Program Course, J.B. Atkinson Elementary School, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292 – March 2016
**Early Childhood Education, Ivy Tech Community College, Sellersburg, IN**  
47172 – March 2016

Culturally Responsive Teaching MAT course, University of Louisville 40292 – September 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Organization and Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 11/2013 – present  | HONEY TREE PUBLISHING, LLC  
Louisville, KY  
CEO and Founder |
| 3/2010 – present   | JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (JCPS)  
Louisville, KY  
Certified Substitute Teacher |
| 10/2014 – 7/2017   | ROOTS & WINGS THEATRE COMPANY  
Louisville, KY  
Poet/ Spoken Word Artist and Educator |
| 7/2014 - 1/2015    | YMCA SAFE PLACE SHELTER HOUSE SERVICES  
Louisville, KY  
Youth Counselor |
| 6/2012 – 2/2014    | MUHAMMAD ALI CENTER  
Louisville, KY  
Associate Educator |
| 8/2011 – 8/2012    | ANNE BRADEN INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE RESEARCH  
Louisville, KY  
Graduate Assistant |
Louisville, KY  
Math Teacher/ Tutor |
Louisville, KY  
Youth Counselor |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Position/Role</th>
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</table>
Louisville, KY  
Academic Mentor and Community Service Chair |
Louisville, KY  
Teen Hot Spot Blog Reporter |
D.C. NATIONAL OFFICE  
Washington, D.C.  
Department of Communications Intern |
| 10/2007 – 1/2008 | **UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE CARDINAL CAM**  
Louisville, KY  
Broadcast Journalist |
| 1/2008 – 5/2008 | **LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION (LRC)**  
Louisville, KY  
Legislative Intern |
Louisville, KY  
Servant Leader Intern |
Louisville, KY  
Founder, Editor-In-Chief and Layout Designer |
| 1/2006 – 5/2006 | **THE LOUISVILLE ECCENTRIC OBSERVER (LEO) WEEKLY**  
Louisville, KY  
Journalism Intern |
Louisville, KY  
Administrative Assistant and Reporter |
Grants and Research Projects


The Healing Tree House Traveling Residency, Creative Writing and Character-based Program. (February 2013 – August 2013). Kentucky Foundation for Women, Artist Enrichment Grant Recipient ($1,000.00).

The Gathering Table, Intergenerational Healing-based Writing and Publishing Program, 2016 One Time Special Grant: Radical Art for Social Change Grant Co-Recipient ($10,000.00), Kentucky Foundation for Women.

The Bridge Kids: An African Heritage Family Activity Book, Grant Co-Recipient (50,000.00 over 3 years), W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Scholarships and Awards

Presidential Diversity Scholar, School of Interdisciplinary & Graduate Studies, University of Louisville, 2018-present.

Dean’s List, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, 2015-2021.

2018 Smith/Wilson Award, Kentucky Education Association (KEA), Diversity Committee. Diversity Luncheon, 2018.


SREB- State Doctoral Scholars Program (DSP), Southern Regional Educational Board, Atlanta, GA, 2016-2019.

Barnetta Cosby Community Awards, Young Adult Achiever Award Recipient, St. Stephen Church, Louisville, KY, 2015.

Arts and Activism, Community Activism Award Recipient, Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts, Louisville, KY, 2014.

Graduate Dean’s Citation, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, 2012.

University of Louisville Creative Writing Scholarship, University of Louisville, English Department, Louisville, KY, 2006-2009 & 2011-2012.

Dean's Scholar, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, 2008 & 2011.

Outstanding Undergraduate Senior, University of Louisville, Department of Pan-African Studies (PAS), Louisville, KY, 2009.

Fola Iyun Scholarship, University of Louisville, Department of Pan-African Studies (PAS), Louisville, KY, 2008-2009.


Woodford R. Porter Full Tuition Scholarship, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, 2005-2009.

Contributor to Publications in Progress

Immekus, J. Measuring the global game changers afterschool program.

Mark, S. Cultural responsiveness in education: STEM thinking through art.

Thomas, S. Factors Inhibiting and advancing teacher certification for candidates of color.

Publications in Print


Wells, Tytianna N.M., Nyamedor (Author), Felix Hayford (Author), and Sweeney-Sheppard, Nzingha Beverley (Illustrator). (2018). The Bridge Kids:


### Other Books Edited and Published

**The Global Pandemic through the Eyes of a Fifth Grader.** (2021). JFK Montessori Elementary School, Louisville, KY.

**The Reading Rockets: A Collection of Stories, Poems and Art.** (2021). St. George’s Scholars Institute Reading Rockets Summer Program, Louisville, KY.

**The Gratitude Awakening Practice.** (2021). Dr. Angel Jackson, Jeffersonville, IN.

**Failure Matters.** (2020). Dr. Curtis L. Nelson III, Louisville, KY.

**The Power of Change. Understanding your Resilience in the Midst of Growth.** Dr. Angel Jackson, Jeffersonville, IN.

**G.L.O.W. Girls League of the West.** Louisville Urban League, Louisville, KY.
Sacred Heart Stories. Students at Sacred Heart Elementary School. Louisville, KY.


---

**Conference Presentations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title and Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Invited Workshop Presenter, 2nd Biennial Heart of America Regional Training Conference, POWERtalk International, Clarion Hotel, Clarksville, IN.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Joint-introduction of speaker, Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research, 5th Annual Lecture, Dr. Michelle Alexander, author of <em>The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness</em>. University of Louisville, Louisville KY.</td>
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**Invited Presentations**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>2013- present</td>
<td>Honey Tree Publishing Author Visit to Schools and Community Centers, cities throughout Kentucky and Indiana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Spoken Word Performer of “The American Dream” and “Do You Wanna Know” Original Poem written by Tytianna Wells and Music Composed by Dr. Tyler Taylor. The Louisville Orchestra,</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Opening Ceremony at The Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts, Louisville, KY.


2020 ACLU of Kentucky 2020 Annual Meeting, Spoken Word Performer, ACLU of Kentucky, Louisville, KY.

2020 Interviewee, Grand Format ils tirent d’abord et posent les questions après a Louisville le spectre des violences policières hant e les afro américains. France TV Info. https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.francetvinfo.fr%2Fmonde%2Fusa%2Fgrand-format-ils-tirent-d-abord-et-posent-les-questions-apres-a-louisville-le-spectre-des-violences-policieres-hant&data=04%7C01%7Ctytiana.wells%40louisville.edu%7C0afec8828e6a844e38e5508d9a9029926%7Cedd246e4a54344e158ae391ad9797b209%7C0%7C0%7C637726650891466873%7CUnkown%7C7TWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWlioiMC4wLiAxMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&data=Et5rFO%2BpAH%2FSsh%2FbmQ9WzdzuFVJF2B836wwue3kVA%3D%3D&reserved=0

2020 Community Artist and Activist who helped spearhead legislation; Sen. Rand Paul Introduces the ‘Justice for Breonna Taylor’ Act | Senator Rand Paul https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.paul.senate.gov%2Fnews%2Fsen-rand-paul-introduces-justice-breonna-taylor-act&data=04%7C01%7Ctytiana.wells%40louisville.edu%7Ccdd2dfe4510b4af6f6e08d9a8ac8d16%7Cedd246e4a54344e158ae391ad9797b209%7C0%7C0%7C637726281448515967%7CUnkown%7C7TWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWlioiMC4wLiAxMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C2000&data=%2FJUaXIkXc%2FzOsD%2FwXo%2FfaaqBBywu42BGsZ95SzjEnj4%3D%3D&reserved=0
2020 Interview on Canopy Café with Tytianna Wells (Ben Sollee). https://youtu.be/ g4SswsTvm4

2020 Spoken Word Performer, The Louisville Orchestra, July 4th Opening Ceremony, Paris Town Louisville, KY.


2016 Invited Author, Global Game Changers Afterschool Program, Muhammad Ali Center, Louisville, KY.

2016 Facilitator, YouthBuild Louisville, Women’s Group, Louisville, KY.

2016 Black History Month Co-Presenter, California Community Center, Louisville, KY.

2015 Co-Presenter, Kentucky Women’s Book Festival, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY.

2015 Co-Presenter, What Classroom Teachers Should Know About Poverty, JCPS Professional Development Course, Westport Middle School, Louisville, KY.

2015 Author, 2nd Annual Author’s Fair, Jeffersonville Township Public Library, Jeffersonville, IN.

2014 Workshop Presenter, The Growing Tree, Westport TAPP, Career Fair, Louisville, KY.

2014 Workshop Presenter, The Growing Tree, South Park TAPP, Career Fair, Louisville, KY.

2014 Author, 1st Annual Author’s Fair, Jeffersonville Township Public Library, Jeffersonville, IN.

2013 Presenter, Character Building, YMCA Safe Place Shelter House, Louisville, KY.

2013 Author, Home of the Innocents, Teen Mother’s. Louisville, KY.

2011  Presenter, International Day of Peace, Joint- Presenter of Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research, Graduate Assistant Project. University of Louisville, Louisville, KY.

2011  Presenter, Delta Academy Program, “My Black is Beautiful.” Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated. Louisville Alumnae Chapter, Louisville, KY.


2008  Panelist, “Building Sisterhood in the Black Community,” Saturday Academy Sister Summit #3, Louisville, KY.

2007  Panelist, African American Theatre Program (AATP) Performance/ Lecture, Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters, Beijing University, Beijing, China.

2007  Presenter, African American Theatre Program (AATP) Performance/ Lecture, Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters, Xiamen University, Xiamen, China.

2007  Presenter, African American Theatre Program (AATP) Lecture, African American Music, Xiamen University, Xiamen, China.

Honey Tree Publishing, LLC Literacy Programs. (2013 - present). Author and Illustrator Tytianna N.M. Wells offers a series of quality and comprehensive educational and multicultural literacy enrichment programs to schools and youth-based organizations. The curricula correspond with National Core Content Standards in English & Language Arts, Social Studies and Arts & Humanities for K-12th grade students.

Muhammad Ali Center, Associate Educator, Louisville, KY. (2012). Developed/ facilitated the #Spiritual YOUth program that focused on the interconnection of spirituality and compassion within a social justice framework that included violence prevention training; and Motown in Black and White Curriculum for 3rd-12th grade students. describe the experience

## TV/Film/International Publications

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Interviewee, TV One Film on the Breonna Taylor Case</td>
<td>(March 2022)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Executive Director, Amplifying Black Women’s Voices</td>
<td>during the Global Pandemic: A Documentary, Archdiocese of Louisville, Louisville, KY (March 2022)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Co-Director and Co-Writer of “Black Excellence” Music Video</td>
<td><a href="https://youtu.be/F6yvSudDr3o">https://youtu.be/F6yvSudDr3o</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Executive Director, Surviving Two Pandemics: Covid-19 and Racism</td>
<td><a href="https://youtu.be/jsN75L60XQc">https://youtu.be/jsN75L60XQc</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Honey Tree Publishing Animated Channel of “Sweet Pea and Sugar Tea’s</td>
<td>Country Family Adventures: A Collection of African-American Poems” Honey Tree Publishing Animated Cartoon Series - YouTube:</td>
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## Professional Memberships

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<tr>
<td>2021- present</td>
<td>American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Board Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009-present</td>
<td>Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014-2018</td>
<td>Louisville Literary Arts (LLA) Board Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020-2021</td>
<td>Keepers of the Torch, Taskforce</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015-2017</td>
<td>National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) student membership and years</td>
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<td>2015-2017</td>
<td>University of Louisville’s Community Engagement Academy</td>
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<td>2015-2017</td>
<td>Roots &amp; Wings Theatre Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research, Community Advisory Council</td>
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<td>2008-2017</td>
<td>Bridge Kids International</td>
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