Career Collaborative Project: Career Services Supporting Racially Minoritized Students'

College-to-Career Transition

by

Terri Carr

Bachelor of Arts, University of Texas at El Paso, 2002

Master of Education, University of Louisville, 2008

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This dissertation was presented

by

Terri Carr

It was defended on

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and approved by

Lori Delale-O'Connor, PhD, Assistant Professor, Center for Urban Education

Brian Guerrero, EdD, Senior Director, Center for Career and Professional Success

Dissertation Advisor: Gina Garcia, PhD, Assistant Professor, Administrative Policy Studies

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In 2018, reports indicated that Black and Latinx graduates were twice as likely to be unemployed than their White counterparts. Serving as a call to action to address this inequity, this inquiry was conducted to examine how campus career services could purposefully design a career intervention that supported Black and Latinx students' college-to-career transition. This inquiry employed an action research approach to implementing a career intervention created to help racially minoritized students access and build social networks to support their postgraduation transition. Set within at a small, predominantly White, Liberal Arts college in northwest Pennsylvania, this intervention emerged as a career coaching project named the Career Collaborative Project. The Collaborative comprised a small group of six Black and Latinx students and three alumni of color who served career coaches. These alumni of color were utilized as institutional agents in this inquiry who helped the students access and build their social networks. Each alumnus hosted a virtual career coaching session with the students to discuss active goal setting, networking, and life after college. After each career coaching session, the students and I held a group reflection conversation to talk about their overall thoughts and feelings about the session topic. At the end of the six-week project, a post-focus group with the students and individual interviews with the alumni were conducted. Three key findings emerged from the data: (1) career planning requires self-examination; (2) students of color need help developing social networks; and, (3) institutional agents aid in students of color career development. Implications

for practice encourage career services leaders to move away from race-neutral and White-centered approaches, and actively engage in supporting Black and Latinx students' postgraduation preparation by helping them access and build their networks.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Preface

My sincerest thanks and blessings go to my loving and supportive soldier and husband, MAJ Melvin L. Carr, USA, Ret. Thank you for taking this journey with me and what a wonderful way to celebrate 30 years of marriage. I love you. Thank you to my beautifully intelligent daughters, Jerai and Micaela. I look to you to inspire my path. You are the beacon to my future and I admire the women you are becoming. I love you; thank you for allowing me to be your mom. Thank you, Dr. Natesha Smith for being a wonderful, encouraging and faithful friend. Words cannot express how much I value your friendship. You are a special spirit who continues to challenge me in both scholarship and travel. To my parents, I am the determined, strong woman that I am because of your demonstration. Thank you. Thank you, Tony for being the best big baby brother any big sister could ever have. Your confidence in me forever warms my heart and keeps me going. Certainly, thank you to my praying cohort sisters, Dr. Theoria Cason and Dr. Kendria Boyd. Thank you for keeping us lifted up in prayer. We did it! Thank you , Dr. Garcia, for your vision and dedication to this project, and encouraging me to speak truth to power in equity and social justice.

1.0 Overview

Career services primary purpose is to cultivate professional and occupational acumen for students throughout their academic careers and into life after graduation through the delivery of career programs and services. (Herr, 2001; Herr, Rayman, & Garis, 1993). As colleges and universities across the nation recognize how vital career preparation is for students' postgraduation success (Brown, 2004; Chan & Derry, 2013), I argue that strengthening transition preparation for racially minoritized students is particularly important, namely for Black and Latinx students[1]. Because Black and Latinx students are more likely than their White counterparts to be underemployed or unemployed (Jones & Schmitt, 2014; Parks-Yancy, 2004; 2012), I contend that closer attention should be made towards their postgraduation preparation. As interest towards postgraduation preparation continues to grow within the career services field (Lane, 2016; Montiero et al., 2015; Murphy et al., 2010; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008), attention to racially minoritized students' postgraduation transition falls short.

In a generated report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018), the national unemployment rate for those with a bachelor's degree averaged 2.7%, the lowest rate in six years; however, the unemployment rate for Blacks holding bachelor's degrees was almost double the average at 4.1%, and Latinx college graduates averaged 3.7%; comparatively the average for Whites was lower than the overall average at 2.4% (BLS, 2018; Economic Policy Institute [EPI], 2018). Although considerable research attention has been devoted to the unemployment

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[1] The term "racially minoritized" will be used to include "Black" and "Latinx" and used interchangeably with these terms

discrepancies plaguing Black and Latinx people (Emeka, 2018); the unsettling result is that there has been no clear explanation as to why these disparities exist, other than race, racism and the racial implications upon which the United States is structured.

To put it plainly, racial discrimination remains a prominent factor in preventing Black and Latinx graduates from securing meaningful and gainful employment upon graduation (Braddock & McPartland, 1987; Cajner, Radler, Ratner, & Vidangos, 2017; Jones & Schmitt, 2014; Nunley, Pugh, Romero & Seals, 2015; Seamster & Charron-Chenier, 2017). Therefore, this matter cannot be dismissed by higher education leaders under the auspice of serving all students objectively and equally. Instead, it is not enough to offer racially minoritized students access into institutions of higher education, financial aid to help pay for tuition, and blanketed career support to help them transition into life after college. That is, diversity and inclusion are not enough; we must move to become equitable for students. Career services leaders must consider providing purposeful strategies for Black and Latinx students as they prepare for the postgraduation transition.

Unfortunately, racially minoritized students are forced to navigate "a culture that was not initially intended for them" (Sikora, 2017, p.2), from admissions into college through navigating the college-to-career transition. To illustrate, Parks-Yancy (2012) explicitly argued that career development is even more imperative for racially minoritized students because they tend to come to college with fewer social capital resources, or social ties, than their White counterparts, arguably due to the long-term effects of racism and white supremacy. Additionally, Yosso (2005) encouraged the field of education to challenge the impact of race and racism on educational structures, practices, and discourse because "racism overtly shaped US social institutions at the beginning of the twentieth century and continues, although more subtly, [that continue to] impact the twenty-first century" (p. 70). Career services must address the racial disparities in career

2

outcomes by helping students forge intentional relationships that extend beyond college and into the workforce. As career services professionals, we are steeped in the knowledge of and have access to resources that enrich students' social capital just as the students come armed with community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) which work in tandem to set them up for postgraduation success (Coleman, 1988; Parks -Yancy, 2004; 2012; Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Justifiably, looking at the unemployment statistics and researchers' calls to action, this inquiry exemplifies why it was important to racially minoritized students, campus career services, and higher education en masse to be purposeful in supporting Black and Latinx students' postgraduation transition.

1.1 Purpose of Inquiry

The purpose of this inquiry was to look at how career services could support the postgraduation transition for racially minoritized students by involving alumni of color as institutional agents. For racially minoritized students, the college-to-career transition might prove to be complicated and complex given the covert and overt efforts of a discriminatory system; however, career services has the capability to organize resources and enact institutional agents to aid in their postgraduation planning process. As such, this inquiry examined how an intentionally-designed career intervention could help racially minoritized students identify realistic postgraduation goals, access and build their social networks, identify resources to help achieve their postgraduation goals, and identify resources to help overcome barriers and challenges related to their race and social status. This problem of practice was grounded in established literature, conceptual and theoretical frameworks, and my professional observations and experiences. The

following inquiry questions guided this study: (1) how does a career program aimed to help racially minoritized students' access and build social networks support their postgraduation transition? (2) How do institutional agents help racially minoritized students build social networks? Specifically, I investigated how career services at Allegheny College could support racially minoritized students' college-to-career transition by facilitating connections with campus social network resources, using alumni of color as institutional agents.

This career intervention design inquiry was an essential focus because Blacks and Latinxs must see others like themselves succeeding (Gardner, 2014). Yet the data suggests that despite attaining a college degree, they are not securing jobs, which I believe was the result of covert discrimination that prevents their true success (Cole & Omari, 2003). While bigotry, prejudice, and racist efforts are a hard-fought battle that cannot be addressed, contained, or resolved within the context of this inquiry, the goal was to uncover opportunities to negate the system and support the postgraduation transition of racially minoritized students.

The impetus for this inquiry occurred within some observations of a phenomenon that I encountered within my place of practice. Upon arrival in 2015 to Allegheny College, a small, private, liberal arts institution with approximately 1950 undergraduate students, I observed that few Black and Latinx students utilized career services, resources, and opportunities in comparison to White students. To that, I noticed that career services did not provide intentional programming or services that targeted these students. This phenomenon led me to ask why racially minoritized students were absent from the career center, and whether they were aware of the resources afforded to them through the center. More importantly, I questioned why the career center had not created initiatives specifically to engage this population of students. Through this work, I wanted to highlight how career services could be a conduit for racially minoritized students' transition to

professional life after college by intentionally engaging and deploying institutional agents to help

the process. By connecting students to campus social capital resources , identified by Parks-Yancy

(2004) as information, influence, opportunity, solidarity, or access to financial capital, career

services could improve access to social network resources through a purposeful career-coaching

intervention. Note, that on December 4, 2018, I resigned my position within the Career Education

office at Allegheny College. However, all the data collection for the career intervention project

was complete at that time.

1.2 Inquiry Approach

Adopting an action research approach to examine how Black and Latinx students take stock

of their college-to-career transition process, I applied qualitative methods to conduct my inquiry.

I aimed to discover how a career coaching intervention aided student in their college-to-career

transition. Conducting a post-focus group, three group reflection discussions with student

participants, and three, one-on-one interviews with alumni participants (Mertens, 2015; Mintrop,

2016); my goal was to help students' access, build, and expand their capital – capital being the

tools and relationships needed to support their postgraduation transition.

The first part of this inquiry implemented a career coaching project for Black and Latinx

students called the Career Collaborative Project (referred to as the Collaborative in this document).

The project's modality allowed flexibility in developing interventions through an adaptive and

collaborative approach to career planning. The collaborative approach to career exploration,

education, and development were designed as a cyclical method. The design created what Efron

and Ravid (2014) referred to as "change-understanding", meaning it is intentional, systematic and

purposeful. This career intervention project allowed me to address the problem within my place of practice and to "exhibit some influence and make change" (Ferrance, 2000, p. 6). The development of the Collaborative empowered student participants to acquire new knowledge, exercise new tools and encourage collaborative conversations.

The Collaborative was implemented within the Career Education office at Allegheny College. This project served as an intervention initiative that engaged Allegheny's Black and Latinx students and alumni. This 6-week intervention, implemented during the fall 2018 semester, was an effort to improve racially minoritized students' postgraduation planning process. Participants learned to recognize and navigate oppressive structures that might prevent them from securing postgraduation employment and created networks to help them meet their postgraduation goals.

Black and Latinx student participants were invited to participate as a group, led by one of three alumni career coaches who identify as persons of color. The alumni career coaches served as facilitators and coaches to guide conversations, provide practical, relevant and real-time advice, and engage in a customized conversation with a small group of participants to address the transition from college to career. This project intended to help address and combat employment disparities for Black and Latinx college graduates by equipping them with social network resources. The Collaborative launched career conversations between students and alumni of color. In particular, student participants were those who expressed enthusiasm in goal-setting in their postgraduation planning. Alumni participants were those who had demonstrated an expressed desire to connect with students of color. This intervention allowed Black and Latinx students an opportunity to build alumni relationships, hear how alumni of color navigated their academic challenges and college-to-career transition, learn how they navigated unexpected challenges and failures, and ultimately

achieved success. This project helped students fine-tune their thinking and strategies towards postgraduation planning.

In the second part of this inquiry, I collected data to learn more about what students understood about navigating the transition from college to career. Specifically, data gathered spoke to what they thought about their postgraduation plans versus their actions towards those plans. Through facilitated discussions with participants, I explored what the students expected to gain from participating in the Collaborative, their understanding of postgraduation planning process, when their planning should start, the resources in-store to help them with the transition, and any underlying concerns associated with the transition from college to career. The post focus group explored student participants' level of knowledge and understanding gained during the project, concerns addressed, and their level of action towards their defined goals associated with their postgraduation transition.

To gain a more in-depth understanding, group reflection discussions were conducted to capture student participants' real-time thoughts, feelings, or new learning (Kim, Hong, Bonk & Lim, 2011; Mertens, 2015). Kim et al. (2011) posited that group reflection activities lead to a "context-rich group learning environment fostering critical thinking and meta-reasoning" (p. 334). This approach and feedback helped me to understand the experiences and skills developed as a result of engaging in the alumni career coaching sessions. To conclude the approach to this inquiry, alumni interviews were conducted with the three participating alumni career coaches after the project ended. These interviews helped me gather the alumni perspectives on their retrospective thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding their college to career transition from Allegheny as a person of color. To that, these interviews allowed the alumni to also reflect on their participation and experience with the project.

1.3 Inquiry Setting

This inquiry was set in the Career Education office at Allegheny College. Allegheny College is a small, private, selective, bachelor-degree granting, liberal arts college situated in northwest Pennsylvania. It is classified as a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) with approximately 1950 students, 1221 of which identify as White, 154 as Black, and 154 as Latinx (Allegheny College, 2017). Of those 1950 students, approximately 54% are identified female and 46% male. An estimate of 597, or 34% of students, are Pell Grant eligible. The student-faculty ratio is 10:1, there are nearly 170 full-time faculty and 26 faculty members who identify as racially minoritized (non-White). Allegheny College proclaims a Statement of Community which says, "Allegheny students and employees are committed to creating an inclusive, respectful and safe …community that will actively confront and challenge racism… and discrimination" (Allegheny College Statement of Community). This proclamation gave way to goals and strategies to address racial inequities, confronting them through teams comprised of essential stakeholders such as faculty, staff, students, and other campus entities with vested interests in the care and success of diverse students.

The Career Education office was where I served as a career counseling practitioner for four years. The Career Education office, part of nine offices that make up The Gateway, a consortium of experiential learning offices, is centrally located to serve students' out-of-classroom learning experiences. Career Education during this inquiry had five full-time staff members and four student-workers. The full-time staff was predominately White (four White professionals) and females (three females and one male). I was the only Black female professional in the office at the time of this inquiry. The student workers were also White. With an office that is majority White,

as Luzzo (2000) suggested, it could be assumed that racially minoritized students may have felt intimidated entering the career services space to receive career support they need.

Career Education is responsible for providing support for career and life planning to students and alumni. The supportive component of these services connects students with alumni to expand resources that support personal and professional goals. The office is charged to develop internship, employment, and networking opportunities to facilitate these goals. A comprehensive set of services were offered through Career Education by its career counselors, including self-examination of values, interests, and strengths, career exploration through occupational research and major selection, goal setting by guided decision-making and action planning, and, action-focused services that help students navigate job search tools, connect to employers, and take advantage of opportunities outside the classroom.

1.4 Significance of Inquiry

This inquiry was significant to the students it intended to support. McCollum (1998) shared that Black students benefit from interventions that improve their career aspirations, expand their career expectations, and prepare them to make career decisions to help them attain their career goals. Yet Black students maintain a level of hesitancy for exercising principle tenets of career development and decision-making (Falconer & Hays, 2006; Parks-Yancy, 2012). Participating in a project of this magnitude gave them the structure and confidence to take ownership of their postgraduation goals (Luzzo, 2000). Encouraged by Parks-Yancy, (2012) she posited institutional assistance "can [help] fill some of the gaps in students' access to social capital resources" (p. 521);

this project moved them towards those social network resources the institution already had in embedded.

Participation in this project was also important for Latinx students because it contributed to personal support beyond family and close friends (Baker, 2013). Although Vela's (2014) study on the advanced educational aspirations of Latinx transfer students recommended that practitioners consider and maintain awareness of the importance family takes on in the decision-making process for Latinx students, she also highlighted the importance of practitioners designing programs and interventions that help develop Latinx students' coping strategies by their resourcefulness. This project accomplished this result by challenging students to take stock of the resources they needed to achieve their postgraduation plans by examining themselves, the resources surrounding them, and developing a strategy – an action plan. Developing institutional bonds and relationships and gaining peer and mentor support on campus was impactful for the success of Latinx students' adherence to their postgraduation goals (Vela, 2014). This project was significant for Latinx students as they had a comfortable environment to ask questions (Vela, 2014) and explore their curiosities and concerns about life after college, particularly as it pertained to their career aspirations.

The college also benefits in several ways. Allegheny College's Statement of Community espoused commitment and interest in those issues concerning diverse student populations and their success. The Statement of Community commits the campus community to "actively confront and challenge [inequities]." The Collaborative actively confronted and challenge social network inequities. Black and Latinx students and alumni of color were central to building, constructing, and implementing this intervention. Understanding the college-to-career transition of Black and Latinx college students is of significant concern worthy of examination. As Sikora (2017) noted,

the evolution of racial landscape is cause for appropriate action to mitigate past and present discrimination against Blacks and Latinxs.

Campus offices with a vested interest in this project included the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Alumni Relations, and, pointedly, Career Education. These offices collectively and collaboratively held data and communication reach to facilitate this project. They also were committed to supporting student success in their mission, goals, and functionality. These offices benefited greatly from a project of this magnitude. Firstly, for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (i.e., IDEAS Center), this initiative focused on their core population of students. In its efforts to holistically serve diverse students, this office looks to support racially minoritized students in ways that promote their curricular and co-curricular success. With a two-person staff, they do this by partnering with other offices across campus to provide as much service to students as possible. By supporting this endeavor, they greatly benefited from providing access to services that were specifically designed to help students create after-college plans, by which they relayed those lessons back to other students of color who did not participate in the project yet maintain close contact with the office.

Secondly, this project allowed Alumni Relations an additional point of entry to connecting with its alumni of color. As it stands currently, the most visible relationship the office maintains with alumni of color is through the Alumni Association of Black Culture. This group of alumni was part of the undergraduate student organization of the same name. However, not all alumni or current students were associated with the organization; therefore, this initiative allowed Alumni Relations to build a broader connection with alumni of color, potentially outside the scope of the Alumni Association of Black Culture. In the Allegheny College Personnel Policies and Benefits Handbook under Allegheny Distinctions, it boasts how anxious Allegheny alumni were to help

fellow alumni [students] find employment [jobs and/or internships] and help them make meaningful connections and find opportunities. This was important to note for this inquiry, as alumni are a valuable resource for Allegheny students. Allegheny maintains and cultivates a strong supportive alumni network base.

Lastly, the project was the first of its kind for the Career Education office. In a PWI with a staff of predominately White professionals, this project broached new ways of seeing and supporting racially minoritized students. It stretched the scope, perspective, and experience of the office as well as introduced students to a staff that moves to understand, offer, and support their unique cultural needs. As an office providing career guidance and postgraduation support, Career Education relies heavily on helping students expand, integrate, and apply their academic knowledge to experiential opportunities. The Career Education office mission states that it is "committed to facilitating student success by connecting students and alumni with resources that support career and life planning" (Allegheny College Career Education, Retrieved from https://sites.Allegheny.edu/career/). Expressly, Career Education must be dedicated to connecting students to alumni to help students achieve their personal and professional goals and aspirations.

Allegheny College is growing in terms of diversity. The number of Black and Latinx students will continue to increase with each academic school year (Allegheny College Enrollment Summary by Semester report, 2018). It appears as though Allegheny desires to reflect the nation's diversity; hence, it must listen to and respond to the unique needs of racially minoritized students, particularly as it pertains to their college-to-career transition. It is important to ensure that they have the support they need to transition into and through college. It is clear that they need support during their transition from class year to class year, yet close attention fails to address what they

need to launch into successful careers after graduation. This is now an imperative. Just as there are committed efforts to their successful entry, there must be committed efforts to their successful exit.

1.5 Delimitations of Inquiry

While this inquiry focused specifically on Black and Latinx students, other racially minoritized groups were not included, primarily due to the significance of the unemployment problem facing Black and Latinx graduates. Focusing on the college-to-career transition as it pertained to post graduation planning is the primary goal of this examination. This work sought to support Black and Latinx students' accessing and building social networks to use in their transition from college into the workforce. I did not examine if and how students pursued internships, jobs, or graduate school opportunities, nor did I track if they secured those opportunities. This work also did not measure career placement. While this would have been an interesting part of the exploration, the time constraint and original scope of the examination inhibited this exploration.

Additionally, this inquiry was exclusively conducted at Allegheny College and did not include other similar institutions in the region. This investigation was rooted in my place of practice to address a salient problem I observed in access to gainful employment for racially minoritized students. Potentially, this intervention could be applied in other institutional settings; however, for these purposes, it was not designed as a generalizable study. Lastly, this inquiry did not investigate the development of mentor/mentee relationship that could bud from such an experience. While this initiative mimicked that of a mentorship program, it had specific goals and timelines constructed to work towards student learning outcomes. This project was more

purposeful and direct in its approach, whereas mentoring programs lend themselves to organic kinship and compatibility between a mentor and a mentee.

1.6 Conclusion

Black and Latinx people are highly discriminated against throughout their college-to-career experiences, entering a job market that was not created to receive their talents, skills, skin, or knowledge. Career services hold the key to usurping the fences of discrimination by helping racially minoritized students engage the networks that they inherit when they matriculate to campus. Awareness and skill building are crucial in developing resilience to navigate the college-to-career transition process, and career centers have the tools and resources to do this. I cannot take on the system of discrimination and racism head-on within the scope of this inquiry. However, within my place of practice in the Career Education office at Allegheny College alongside institutional agents as allies, together we cultivated a strategic effort to support Black and Latinx students' college-to-career transition. With this inquiry, I designed networking channels for racially minoritized students intended to circumvent roadblocks and barriers for a successful transition. This endeavor allowed racially minoritized students to become aware of potential barriers, then examine and create strategies to maneuver around them. With this inquiry I did not examine where they were going after Allegheny, only to help them access the tools to get there.

2.0 Literature Review

There is a growing body of literature on the college-to-career transition (Lane, 2016; Montiero et al., 2015; Murphy et al., 2010; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008); however, few studies focus on the role of career services supporting racially minoritized students in the process. In order to understand how college career services can address the college-to-career transition for Black and Latinx students, it is important to know college career services' foundation, structure, and purpose. This examination of literature will address what is known about college career centers and their primary purpose. First, I review the history of career centers on college campuses, discuss the structure and purpose of career centers, and then talk about the services and programs they provide to students. In each section, I discuss how racially minoritized students were intentionally or unintentionally considered or excluded from vocational support and/or the literature. To conclude this chapter, I will introduce Stanton-Salazar's social capital theory, which captured institutional agency as a conduit to support students and served as the theoretical guiding framework for this inquiry.

2.1 Career Centers: History & Evolution

Adapting and responding to dramatic societal economic and political shifts, career centers morphed dramatically from their inception into their current existence on college campuses (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Herr, 2013; & Pope, 2000). Since its inception, however, racially minoritized people, particularly Black and Latinxs, were not considered or recognized as part of

the career and vocational guidance process. Looking over the history and literature available surmises that the efforts of vocational guidance concentrated on employment placement of Whites (Boski, 2014; Herr, 2013; Steffes, n.d.; Young, 2017; & Warne, 1904). The model and methods of vocational support were built on a differentiated population based on the socioeconomic status of the majority White homogeneous race (Steffes, n.d). In a comparative examination of the literature, researchers have maintained that the historical role and purpose of career services were to serve a racially White majority population (David, 2006; Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Guerrero, 2015; Herr, 1993; & Spencer, 2000).

In the early 1900s, vocational services and guidance were not located on college campuses, instead they were adopted by the government to address societal needs, to accommodate the influx of immigrants as part of a viable workforce, and to fill and fuel the United States' industrial complex with the likes of its increasing population of European immigrants. Slavic races, those who migrated from Poland, Austria, Hungary, Russia, and Italy, needed support seeking and securing employment in their new country, hence the impetus of vocational guidance and placement (Herr, 2013; Young, 2017; Warne, 1904). To that point, Pope (2000) supported that placement services outside higher education were specifically developed to aid the urban and industrial sector in the same era.

Concerning change and evolution, in the 1920s – 30s the nation grew, as did the need to educate more people, and vocation assistance adjusted once again to accommodate teachers in vocation guidance (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Pope, 2000). More vocational guidance counselors started to emerge; however, it is unclear whether those vocational resources were on or off campus, or whether the help was provided before or after graduation. However, with what is understood

about the racial make-up of the country and access to social and economic resources to build wealth, there is an implicit assumption that racially minoritized people were not considered.

On the heels of the vocational guidance emergence for Slavic immigrants and the expanded focus on teachers, vocational education and career counseling further transformed as a result of U.S. veterans returning from World War II and servicemembers converging upon higher education campuses across the country (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Guerrero, 2015; Pope, 2000). Many veterans took advantage of their government-funded higher education allotment through the GI Bill/Servicemen's Readjustment Act. This next iteration of career assistance would signal the beginning of a transformation of vocational guidance into career services held by outside agencies in the public-sector area and on college campuses to support students entering the workforce (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Guerrero, 2015; Pope, 2000). The need to connect veterans to jobs demanded job placement centers on college and university campuses during the 1940s – 1960s (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Guerrero, 2015; Pope, 2000). During this time, institutions provided vocational support to veterans on campus through veteran affairs officials, whose primary responsibility was to process government paperwork for tuition and housing allowances. Veteran affairs officials, though not an official source for vocation and/or career education, supported student veterans in the best way possible (Guerrero, 2015). Campus career services at that time tended not to be full-scale offices with formally educated or trained personnel but mainly staffed by administrative assistants (Spencer, 2014).

This type of occupational support began the markings of the formation for career services on campus. It is important to note that while there was much to celebrate about the government investing in the education and occupational success of returning war veterans, the GI Bill was issued to all veterans, but mostly afforded to White male veterans. Black males returning from the

war were unable to take advantage of the GI Bill in the same way as their White brethren, rendering Black veterans unable to easily access vocational education or guidance (Herbold, 1995). As noted by Katznelson (2005),

Affirmative action for Whites, the path to job placement, loans, unemployment benefits, and schooling was tied to local VA centers, almost entirely staffed by White employees…[and] educational institutions…veteran status that black soldiers had earned was …at the discretion of the parochial intolerance" (p.128).

It is here where we see a lack of occupational (career and vocational) support by college campuses, not by malfeasance, but by solely focusing on the campus student population, which included a critical mass of White males.

During the 1970s and 1980s career support services for students were erected on campuses and their mission progressed from placement functions - from the previous era - matching employers to employees - to a counseling-based model providing advising, coaching, and college-career life planning approach to students (David, 2006; Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Pope, 2000; Spencer, 2014). The landscape for educational access also began to shape into more diverse and multicultural experiences as racially minoritized students, and women were granted access to an education previously denied to them (Thelin, 2004). This change in the landscape for higher education was coined "the great transformation" (Thelin, 2004), as there were now more Latinx and Blacks entering college campus across the nation than in previous decades (Census Bureau, 1999). Yet they were still in the minority. As noted by the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2010), in 1976, 352, 893 Latinx students enrolled in degree-granting institutions across the country, while 943, 355 Black students enrolled disproportionately in terms of overall enrollment of White students who matriculated in at 7,740,485. With these types of enrollment

gaps, despite the increase and change in demographics, career services were not prompted to change their approach to providing specialized career services for racially minoritized students because most campuses were still predominately or majority White (Means, Jones & Bryant, 2016; Obleton, 1984).

Moving into the 1990s and 2000s, career centers' services on college campuses grew quickly – hiring career counselors and advisors to provide career development, education, and guidance to students seeking support. New resources and dedicated services transformed career centers significantly into conduits of networking for employers and students. This model is much of what we recognize and expect from current campus career centers. Contomanolis (2014) emphasized that the viability of college career centers now relies on their ability to build meaningful connections with students, employers, and alumni through networking. Vinson et al. (2014) further stated,

In order for [career service offices] CSOs and institutions to continue to provide effective and efficient career resources and services, colleges and universities must continue to see CSOs as administrative units that are valuable to students, alumni, and the entire institution. Increased awareness and support of CSO operations and the human capital involved in its delivery are necessary to maintain fully functional and viable CSO units (p. 207).

The literature maintains that career centers' purpose in the 21st century must be to build meaningful relationships, offering that connections should happen to remain viable resources on college campuses (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014). As career centers offer a host of resources, valuable information, and connections, pooling this capital to provide support and build bridges for minoritized students could lead to considerable outcomes for Black and Latinx students.

After the recession of 2008, economic uncertainty and the cost of college created a demand of accountability on postsecondary institutions and placed pressure on career centers to provide better and quantifiable career outcomes for students (Contomanolis, 2014). Noting the shift in career services' purpose and delivery, Hammond (2001) predicted the state of urgent accountability that career centers face. Institutions are expected to demonstrate value-added through student success (Garis, 2014; Pun & Kubo, 2017). Uncertain pressures such as wavering economic conditions, increasing costs, and decreasing funding for higher education, affect career outcomes for students (Contomanolis, 2014). Students and families are expecting to receive jobs after graduation. Therefore, this demand creates pressure on career centers to rethink the way they deliver services that help students transition from college to careers. In an effort to meet those external expectations, demands, and pressures, higher education institutions are challenging traditional ways of delivering services to students and employers.

Wendlandt and Rochlen (2008) encouraged practitioners to collaborate with institution administrators to "address changes that could benefit students and the [college]" (p. 159). Here the conversation offers transverse perspectives from that of the career practitioner to that of the career center as a whole. Williams (2007) believed that career services centers were aptly situated within the institution to liaise between the institution and the employer to promote and advance diversity beyond the walls of academe. Career centers are "symbiotic linkage to the many people and institutions that make a college vital and important in this time" (Heppner & Johnston, 1986, p.8) and should be the front door to the college. So much connectivity relies on the career center and its services to students that it must be reactive and adaptive to the needs of the many and the few. Being reminded of the White history that undergirds campus career centers, attention to the needs of racially minoritized students is not a built-in function. Since the beginning, the responsibilities

of career centers were to prepare White students for the transition to the workforce, and those students reflected a population of White males. Career centers ought to be compelled to address the college-to-career transitional needs of Black and Latinx students.

2.2 Career Centers: Structure & Purpose

Having outlined the history and evolution of career centers in the previous section, this section will discuss their typical 21st-century structure and purpose. Because career centers have maintained an evolving and ever-changing purpose on college and university campuses over several decades (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Spencer, 2000), it is important to note the ever-changing state of career centers contingent upon the challenges of the labor market, which uniquely encourages their adaptability. Contemporarily, the purpose of college career centers is to support and nurture students' career-related planning through targeted programs, services, and resources (Contomanolis, Cruzvergara, Dey, & Steinfeld, 2015). These programs, services, and resources are designed to help students integrate, apply, and expand their curricular and co-curricular knowledge into their occupational aspirations (Guerrero, 2015). Brown (2004) noted that career centers are intentionally designed to facilitate students' career development journey. However, admittedly, Brown and Lent (2005) acknowledged that career counselors continue doing so without the recognition of the cultural complexities of racially minoritized students. While the purpose of a career center is to prepare students for career transition and build their career acumen, they continue to treat all students alike, offering color-neutral services.

On a college campus, the career center's organizational structure is influenced and informed by the college or university's philosophical foundation; its mission, vision, culture, and

values (Lucas, 1986). These structures can range from a centralized to a decentralized model, or a combination of the two (Bechtel, 1993; Garis, 2014; Lucas, 1986). They can vary widely from serving as the primary source for "career knowledge" on the campus to a system where career planning and services occur across the campus in specific academic departments and/or career field specific industries (Brown, 2004; Guerrero, 2015; Krieshok, 2001; Schaub, 2012). Career centers can also take on hybrid forms of the two models. Typically housed under the student affairs or academic affairs divisions, career centers are generally staffed with a director, associate and assistant directors, career coaches and/or career counselors, and administrative staff (Herr, Rayman, & Garis, 1993).

Furthermore, the overall purpose of career centers is to provide comprehensive support throughout the career decision-making process (Brown, 2004; Guerrero, 2015; & Krieshok 2001). In evaluating this purpose, Krieshok (2001) found that students who utilized campus career centers were more likely to develop skills to pinpoint and articulate career goals, remain open to various options, and maintain a broad perspective during the job search. He found significant importance in career centers' interventions for students in that the center itself and the service interventions provided were innovative mechanisms that delivered comprehensive career services, which helped them broaden and explore multiple occupational alternatives (Krieshok, 2001). However, in Krieshok's (2001) review of the empirical literature on career decision-making for students, it is left to assume that the evaluation was inclusive of all students. Brown and Lent (2005) added, "…career choice interventions seems to treat all [students], regardless of presenting concerns and goals, …as if they are alike…and also if race and ethnicity have inconsequential influences on their responsiveness to the outcomes [the student] might attain" (p.451). Even as researchers consistently state that racially minoritized students possess a different approach to career

development and career decision-making (Brown & Lent, 2005; Berrios-Allison, 2011; Harper, 2008; Luzzo, 2000), career centers continue to overlook this very important component when determining their purpose and the structure, and the overall impact on Black and Latinx students. This way of functioning cannot continue; we want Black and Latinx students to thrive postgraduation.

2.2.1 Career Center Staff

When looking at the college career center, it is important to consider professional staff. Researchers concur that within career services, the practitioner –career professional or counselor- is at the crux of success in career sense-making with students (Contomanolis, 2014; Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). If this is true, there is a fair case for career services practitioners to further their hand at connecting the racially minoritized to resources to help make sense of their career plans and impact their postgraduation transition. Brown (2004) countered that practitioners, after spending hours with students, might have little impact on their career decision-making process despite utilizing career programs and services. Brown (2004) assessed that there might be a wide variety of factors influencing students' career decision-making process. Either way, little has been done, overall, to design systems with the needs of racially minoritized students in mind, who more times than their White peers have a greater need for career services.

Because the population of White faculty, staff, and administrators far outnumber that of persons of color among the ranks of higher educational institutions, it is safe to assume that most of these career centers are all White staff, which contribute to an ineffectual support structure for racially minoritized students. The Chronicle of Higher Education, published by Almanac (2017),

reported that of all higher education institution administrators, faculty, and staff (e.g., 4-year public, private, and for-profit, and 2-year public, private, and for-profit), Black and Latinx professionals barely comprised 10% of the reported professional staff. Black professional staff members averaged 8.6%, and Latinx professional staff member averaged 6.2%. Due to these disparities in employment of people of color on college campuses, racially minoritized students do not see people that look like them for inspiration and have fewer such models in their college experiences (Harper, 2008; Berrios-Allison, 2011; Luzzo, 2000), Luzzo (2000) encourages higher education institutions to employ more racial minoritized career practitioners. I move this notion a bit further to say that career centers need to make their mission, vision, and goals align with a purpose grounded in equity, and not just focus on being culturally diverse. This is important to note because the various ways that career centers are organized might substantially contribute to Black and Latinx students' access to knowledge and tools for postgraduation success.

2.3 Career Centers: Services & Programs

Wendlandt and Rochlen (2008) stated "[College] career counseling is … focused on choosing a major, improving resumes, practice interviewing skills, and providing job search assistant" (p. 152). Career services integrate practices such as career counseling, employer relations development, on-campus recruiting sessions, job readiness workshops, and career and graduate school fairs to establish and grow connections (Spencer, 2014). Integrated services are a growing part of a battery of resources used to support student job readiness and these areas are crafted to help students develop confidence, social skills, networking, communication, and interpersonal skills (Williams, 2007). Further, Schaub (2012) expanded this notion by dividing

career services into four main service areas: (1) counseling and advising, (2) educational sessions and workshops, (3) experiential learning (e.g. job, job shadowing, and internships) opportunities, and (4) networking sessions with stakeholders such as alumni and industry professionals. Together they build employability skills (Harvey, 2001), which integrate classroom knowledge, communication skills, and confidence.

Research to this point gives little indication as to the population of students for which services are intended; in other words, the research is race-neutral, with little attention paid to services and programs that are specific for racially minoritized students. Though, Bechtel (1993) briefly acknowledges that in the 1970s, when "higher education recruited students… who had previously been unable to attend college" (p. 25), services were explicitly created to support "minorities" and women because it was "sound educational policy in response to [their] developmental needs" (p. 25). Current literature fails to advance this research, and due to changes in the societal landscape since the 1970s in the United States, it cannot be assumed that students studied at that time continue to suffer from the same constraints and issues now. Williams (2007) posited that career services must maintain a perspective that the student body is not homogenous. Long held principle that career services "offer a universal service on a demand-led basis" (Layer, 2003 p.16), speak to services being rendered as a one-size-fits-all approach. Ultimately, career centers that fail to understand the background and family history of students fail to recognize the needs of the minoritized groups.

Most studies in the field of career services have only focused on the concept of "all" students and treating "all" students the same; however, treating all students the same can be problematic for racially minoritized students who have complex needs associated with career development (Berrios-Allison, 2011; Harper 2008; Krieshok, 2001; Luzzo, 2000). The long-held

principle that career services and programs are homogenized and offer universal approaches to services has been thematic across this examination of the literature. The concept of career services and programs being color neutral or generalizable to everyone based on career development life-span process, which was developed for White males, permeates the literature (Brown & Lent, 2005; Evans, Forney, & Guido, 1998; Krieshok, 2001; Luzzo, 2000). There is an understanding of the career center's role and purpose that is to prepare students for career-related planning through targeted programs, services, and resources (Contomanolis, Cruzvergara, Dey, & Steinfeld, 2015); however, we also recognize, through the literature, that the career center in its current evolution continues to create, execute, and promote programs and services through a lens of sameness with little regard to cultural differences.

Moreover, career centers are staffed by a predominately White staff; therefore, execution of programs and services to racially minoritized students most likely do not have people who look like them training their skills (Almanac, 2017; Harper, 2008; Berrios-Allison, 2011; NCES, 2010). Career centers might also be understaffed, considering the student-to-staff ratio (Peterkin, 2012), which might contribute to their inability or reluctance to engage in culturally sensitive practices when working with racially minoritized students. Lastly, because of the tradition of Whiteness, career centers have forged ahead without genuinely making a commitment toward real inclusion in programs and services; therefore, it could be suggested that perhaps, career centers are unwilling to authentically serve racially minoritized students because it would no longer allow color neutrality in programs and services (Vue, Haslerig, & Allen (2017). Vue et al. (2017) posited that there is a high cost to confronting institutional discriminatory practices – institutional racism – because it would require a shift in understanding that racism does not merely lie within the individual, but with the institution, or in this case the place of practice. Vue et al. continued that

white fragility "compounds the difficulty in addressing institutional racism by re-centering White individuals' feelings rather than structural issues" (p. 877). Career centers have structural issues, and its vehicle to those issues appear in the delivery of programs and services that are not purposefully tailored to support Black and Latinx students outside of race neutrality practices.

Across the nation, college career practitioners are overwhelmed with the volume of counseling appointments (Williams 2007) which prevent them from targeting services for students, particularly racially minoritized students. Supporting that notion, Peterkin's (2012) declared that "42% of career center directors said staffing limitations were the biggest burden on their success" (p. 2). The staff member to student ratio averaged approximately 860 students per staff member. With an overtaxed staff, programs and services would inevitably suffer and with it the dismissal of the specification of services and programs needed to support Black and Latinx students. Nevertheless, I push forward in demanding that career centers make programs and services for racially minoritized students a top priority.

2.4 Career Development Theory

Career development theory is the framework upon which career services are grounded and delivered (Brown & Lent, 2005). For this inquiry it was practical to provide some brief information about foundational career development theories in which career services inlay their work and researchers explore their fields. To that, I will draw attention to culturally relevant career development theories. Although all are important to the work considered and implemented in career centers' programs and services, they are not the primary focal point in this inquiry. The rationale for this choice was dictated by the inquiry questions and the data being examined within

this study. However, the framework that guided this inquiry is outlined in the theoretical framework section below.

2.4.1 Leading career development theorists

The literature on career development theories has its roots in Super's (1957) life-span, life-space theory, and Holland's (1959) career typology theory. As major theoreticians, Super and Holland, are heavily examined within career development research and practice (Whiston & Brecheisen, 2002). Their foundational literature and assumptions covering career development over life-span, improvement of self-concept, person-environment congruence, and career choice continue to be substantial influences on structure and process approaches to career development (Bloch, 2005); however, Super and Holland theories were originally developed by studying the experiences of middle-class White males. While Super and Holland's assumptions have upheld in studies with African Americans as foci, "most scholars and practitioners agree that both theories demand more research attention before concluding broader to African Americans, other [persons of color], and women (Cornelius, 2010, p. 76). Despite differences of approach by scholars to use Super and Holland's theories with people of color, there is overall agreement that a single or comprehensive model does not exist that speaks to the career development needs of racially minoritized people (Barrett, 2000; Hackett & Byars, 1996; Humphrey, 2007; Osipow & Littlejohn, 1995).

Indeed, several studies looking at the career development of African Americans, Latinxs, and Asians (Baker, 2013; Barrett, 2000; Cornileus, 2010; Frett, 2018; Gardner, 2014; Murry & Mosidi, 1993; Tang, 2001; Trusty, Ng, & Ray, 2000; & Tuliao, 2018) continue to move the literature forward adding to the understanding of the complexities associated with the career

development of people of color; unfortunately, very few focus on undergraduate students and the their college-to-career transition. Most certainly, the literature with this focus did not maintain the viewpoint of career services. Cornelius (2010) focused on career development experiences of African American professional men in corporate America, the impact of racism and strategies leading to positive career development. Finding that career development theorization considering African Americans created limitation in the relevance and applicability to major theories in career development. I further that the lack of career development theorizing not only limits relevance for African American professional but limits relevance for career services when designing programs and services to guide Black and Latinx students.

2.4.2 Culturally relevant career development theories

Culturally relevant theories include the following (Cornelius, 2010): Alfred's (2001) bicultural life structure framework; Cheatham's (1990) heuristic model of career development; Cross's (1971) nigrescence theory; Dickens and Dickens' (1982) career development model; Gottfredson's (1981) theory of circumscription, compromise, and self-creation; and Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994) social cognitive career theory (SCCT). These career development theories are identified as culturally relevant because their theories and practices create inclusion by centering cultural context variables of others' diverse backgrounds (Alfred, 2001; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1995; Hartung, 2002; Osipow & Littlejohn, 1995). Commonly, career development focus on such things as interests, aptitudes, personality traits (Super, 1956; Holland 1959); however, culturally relevant theories incorporate and capitalize on these constructs such as race/ethnicity, gender identity, culture, social roles, and values to better understand culturally diverse groups of people (Hartung, 2002). Even though career practitioners and career center

leaders have access to and some knowledge of these emerging culturally impactful theories, when studied, African Americans have been treated monolithically. Cornelius (2010) found this to be true in her study of the career development of professional African American. While Cornelius' work studied the career development of African American corporate males, this notion of monolithic treatment holds for most career centers services and programs as they continue to deliver little to no differentiated support for Black and Latinx students. Preparing specific career interventions for Black and Latinx students helps give voice to racially minoritized students and contributes to their overall postgraduation transition success.

2.5 Guiding Framework: Institutional Agency

This inquiry was guided by social capital theory Stanton-Salazar's (1997) institutional agency theory. This section defines the terms and theoretical concepts accessed in this inquiry. Each theoretical concept in this inquiry was valuable in creating the synergy needed to develop the career intervention designed to support the postgraduation transition of racially minoritized students with the support of alumni of color.

2.5.1 Social Capital Theory

Social capital facilitates collective action and generates shared resources in communities. Most consider social capital to be an asset that contributes to human, financial, physical, political, cultural, and environmental capital (Green & Haines, 2002). Broadly, Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) forwarded the definition of social capital as an application occurring in social

relationships between actors, both individual and corporate actors. Coleman (1988) expanded that social capital depends on social structure relationships that allow for the successful transference of capital resources including (1) trustworthiness, obligations, and expectations of structures; (2) information channels; and (3) norms and effective sanctions. Coleman (1988) reasons, "all social relations and social structures facilitate some forms of social capital; actors [people] establish relations purposefully and continue time when they continue to provide benefits" (p.105). He continued, "Certain kinds of social structure… are especially important in facilitating some forms of social capital" (p.105).

For this inquiry, it was suitable to consider Coleman's perspective in order to examine how career services can activate capital using institutional agents to develop structures that support racially minoritized students. Further, Parks-Yancy (2004), in her examination of how social capital resources are acquired and transferred, concluded that social capital resources' exchange and outcomes for minoritized people were much less than Whites. Part of Parks-Yancy's (2004) research recommendation was to encourage higher education institutions to better facilitate the exchange of social capital resources. This inquiry was designed to have career services purposefully develop college-to-career transition support for Black and Latinx students. As such, I used social capital theory to understand how they could access and build their social networks, which is part of the social capital resources Parks-Yancy (2004) speaks.

2.5.1.1 Institutional agents.

Institutional agents are a critical factor in fostering success for students (Guiffrida, 2005; Museus & Quaye, 2009; Museus & Ravello, 2010; Museus & Neville, 2012) and are defined as,

> Individual[s] who occupy one or more hierarchical positions of relatively high-status and authority. Such individual[s], situated in a [students'] social network, manifests

[their] potential role as an institutional agent, when, on behalf of the [student], [they] act

to directly transmit, or negotiate the transmission of highly valued resources. (Stanton-

Salazar, 2011, p. 1067).

Stanton-Salazar (2011) acknowledged that while most characteristics of the concept of

social capital are an elusive quality, he put forth the framework that defines social capital as

"consisting of resources and key forms of social support embedded in one's network or association,

and accessible through direct or indirect ties with institutional agents" (p.1067). This framework

functioned as the core of this work regarding career services, minoritized students, and institutional

agents. By utilizing alumni of color as institutional agents to help student access and build their

social network in turn supporting their college-to-career transition demonstrates how Stanton-

Salazar's work was central to the core of this project.

The transference of support through sharing valuable resources to Black and Latinx

students was the desired outcome for this inquiry. In Stanton-Salazar's (2011) work, he looked at

how adolescents (pre-college) gained access to vital resources through relationships with

institutional agents; by utilizing Stanton-Salazar's (2011) framework, this inquiry looked at the

complexities of network relationships and the multiple roles played by resourceful and committed

institutional agents that can help design interventions within environments that can "authentically

empower both [students] and agents" (p. 1067). This process was exemplified in the study

undertaken by Garcia and Ramirez (2018) as they investigated how institutional agents used their

social capital to develop structures that empower minoritized college students. This study

identified ways institutional leaders were challenging the pre-formed structures to create policies

and programs necessary for supporting the needs of these students. The findings indicated

positively that institutional leaders were empowering faculty and staff to become institutional

agents and that institutional leaders were facilitating processes "toward becoming empowerment agents" (Garcia & Ramirez, 2018, p. 377).

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the importance of career centers by discussing their history and purpose, their programs and services, and the outcomes emerging from programs and services. The proposed inquiry built on this information, challenging career centers to confront inequitable outcomes for racially minoritized students. This inquiry speaks to the transition into the workplace for racially minoritized students and aims to better prepare them for this transition. As Parks-Yancy (2004) explained, although minoritized people have made some strides in professional careers and attainment of capital, they continue to have difficulty obtaining employment or yielding comparable career outcomes as Whites. This is partly due to few social ties to networks that can provide employment information and have hiring influence, or the ability to hire (Parks-Yancy, 2004). This inquiry was encouraged by the requests of researchers to have career services address racial disparities and inequities in job outcomes as well as to be accountable to racially minoritized students who enter the college-to-career transition with access to less capital than White students.

3.0 Methodology

The unemployment rate is as low as it has been in five years nation-wide; however, for Blacks and Latinxs, it is still twice as high (BLS, 2018). Sadly, this disproportionate rate does not change for Blacks and Latinx with the attainment of a four-year degree. With this inquiry, I was compelled to address these inequities through my practice and with the students I immediately served. As a career counseling practitioner, I felt personally obligated to fight against inequities within my sphere of influence. Through scholarly inquiry, I explored how career services could activate their resources to help Black and Latinx students combat labor market inequities. Specifically, in this inquiry, I explored how the Career Education office at Allegheny College could support racially minoritized students' college-to-career transition through a targeted career intervention.

In this chapter, I define the purpose of this inquiry, including the questions that guided this work, and describe the setting in which it occurred. Also, the chapter covers my epistemological approach to the work, meaning the perspective through which I conducted this inquiry, as well as my reflexivity, which is a disclosure of the identities I possess and acknowledgement that they informed my view. Further, this chapter describes the action research approach taken for the examination, the sample used, a description of the career intervention, an explanation of the data sources, the data analysis process, and the limitations to the inquiry approach.

3.1 Inquiry Purpose & Questions

The purpose of this inquiry was to examine how a student career intervention, a coaching project called the Career Collaborative Project, conducted within the Career Education office at Allegheny College, helped Black and Latinx students' access, build, and expand their *capital* – the tools and relationships needed for a successful postgraduation transition. The Collaborative aimed to improve racially minoritized students' college-to-career transition by connecting them to alumni of color to help them clarify their goals and approaches to reach those goals. To do this, the following inquiry questions guided my work:

1. How does a career program aimed to help racially minoritized students access and build social networks to support their postgraduation transition?

2. How do institutional agents help racially minoritized students build social networks?

Through coaching and mentoring, students were challenged to think more deeply about their postgraduation goals and their approach to attaining them. This project examined how racially minoritized students identified their postgraduation goals; accessed and built social networks; identified resources to help achieve their postgraduation goals, and; identified resources to help them overcome specific barriers and challenges. Mostly, this project helped them set and develop goals that lead to purposeful and intentional plans needed to embark upon the career search process. To this, there was also a desire to provide the students with tools to navigate potentially discriminatory roadblocks and barriers. As Borowczyk-Martins (2018) surmised, they might not be able to "direct their searches away from prejudiced employers … since all employers know it takes longer for [Black and Latinx] to find a job, they will take advantage of that and offer [them] lower wages" (p. 46). By partnering with institutional agents, this project helped racially minoritized students circumvent unforeseeable barriers to entering the labor market. Having a plan

of action with identified resources to aid in addressing obstacles set students up for success, not just in the short-term job searches, but in the life-long career and meaningful work inquiry.

3.2 Epistemological Approach

The world view with which I approached this inquiry was transformative. Mertens (2015) states, "transformative researchers consciously and explicitly position themselves side by side with the less powerful in a joint effort to bring about social transformation" (p. 21). My background both personally and professionally led me toward a transformative lens because of its flexibility when working with and for minoritized populations. Mertens (2015) argued that the transformative approach (1) places central importance on the experiences of diverse groups, (2) analyzes how and why inequities are reflected in a disproportionate power structure, (3) examines how results of social inquiry link to action, and (4) uses theory to develop the research approach. Because this inquiry sought to understand how career services could intentionally support racially minoritized students' postgraduation transition by building their social network resources, it allowed me the opportunity to shine a light on social and systematic inequities and take action to disrupt them (Mertens, 2015).

As a transformative researcher, I recognize the discriminatory nature of the workforce which is based on racially constructed biases and prejudices that prevent Black and Latinxs from getting jobs postgraduation. My goal was to equip students with tools and resources to work within the constraints of racial realities and overcome those barriers. Fundamentally, there are no real factors to explain the fact that Black and Latinx students face unfathomable unemployment rates upon graduation compared to their White peers other than long-standing institutional racism. This

transformative approach allowed me to address the barriers facing Black and Latinx students during their postgraduation planning and college-to-career transition, meanwhile equipping them with tools to work within the structural barriers that have prevented Black and Latinx graduates long-term postgraduation success.

3.3 Reflexivity

The transformative approach aligned with my own view of the world as a Black woman who seeks to disrupt inequitable systems, particularly as they affect racially minoritized students (Mertens, 2015). I was deeply committed to this work as a first-generation, racially minoritized, doctoral student who had come to the realization of employment outcomes for Black and Latinx college graduates as inequitable compared to White college graduates. I was drawn to this inquiry as a racially minoritized career counselor and Student Affairs practitioner with over 14 years of experience and similar cultural backgrounds as my participants.

Having had similar backgrounds and experiences as a racially minoritized person who has transitioned from college into the workforce, these factors allowed me to approach the work responsively as I was able to anticipate the unique internal discord that students incurred contemplating the next steps to take after college. Berger (2015) suggested that a researcher might influence the work "because [participants] may be more willing to share their experiences with a researcher whom they perceive as sympathetic to their situation" (p. 220). Black and Latinx students in this inquiry were more willing to participate and authentically share in the process as a result of our shared experiences.

To be transparent and accountable to myself and the inquiry, I observed how the power relation in my positionality "shape[d] the recruiting and interviewing process of research" (Berger, 2015, p. 204). As a career counselor in the Career Education office, during the time of the inquiry, and the only person of color, it was likely that I would be closely tied to the some of the students participating in the inquiry as they were students with whom I had advised before. This posed a challenge because some might have participated out of obligation to me because of our previous connection (Berger, 2015). However, to remain neutral, I informed the students they were under no obligation to me or my position to participate, participating was voluntary, and that they had the freedom to leave the project at any time.

Beyond my embodied social identities, my previous professional experience influenced my perspective. After living in El Paso, Texas for eight years, and graduating from the University of Texas at El Paso, a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), I had opportunities to work closely with Latinx students, faculty, and friends. In that time, I learned quite a bit about Latinx culture and the importance of family, particularly as it pertained to making significant life decisions. This insight brought an understanding to this project that helped me connect and communicate with Latinx students. This was not to say that I knew and understood all of the cultural nuances and dynamics of Latinx students, eight years of immersion could not account for a lifetime of the Latinx experience; however, its informed understanding.

I have dedicated the past 14 years to crafting my skill as a Student Affairs practitioner and to the holistic development of students, specifically focusing on their transition into the college setting, and through their academic progression. Transition issues associated with each level, and how they transition from the college environment into the real world has been a primary focus for my career. Being the administrator, practitioner, and researcher in this study created multiple levels

of responsibility in maintaining the accuracy and credibility of the work. Although it was sometimes challenging to separate my internal reflections of the data from my own biases and opinions, I allowed the literature and the data to dictate my approach to the inquiry, while at the same time understanding that my social and professional identities presented challenges throughout the process.

All of these elements associated with my embodied physical and positional truths drew me to hone in on the needs of racially minoritized students, particularly as it pertained to their postgraduation transition and the responsibility of career services in advocating for their college-to-career success. I conducted this study with an innate understanding of my positioning and a commitment to remain objective and responsive to the needs of my participants.

3.4 Inquiry Setting

This section establishes the setting in which the inquiry took place. The setting of this inquiry was particularly important to consider in full context and how the setting constrained or contributed to Black and Latinx students' ability to prepare adequately for meaningful employment after college. In order to do this, I highlighted some of the institution's racially turbulent history and culture. A small private institution located in rural northwestern Pennsylvania; Allegheny College was founded in 1815. Allegheny was initially designed to serve as a seminary-type institution focused on developing critical thought of White, Protestant males of the Methodist faith. Its actual reputation grew as an institution that rarely enrolled non-Christian students (Helmreich, 2005). It was only after the Second World War that seven Jewish students enrolled compared to 209 Methodist, 183 Presbyterians, and 130 Roman Catholics (Helmreich, 2005). Yet as Helmreich

(2005) suggested, "The College reflected the Anglo-Saxon and Protestant citizenry that had founded and sustained the College and still held established power in both nation and town" (p. 346).

While the College progressed from its past of homogenization, it sustained certain characteristics that constrained the success of racially minoritized students. Demonstrated by low enrollment of students of color throughout its history (Helmreich, 2005), between the years of 1940 – 1970, the College enrolled a range of 5 – 9 Black students, then with intentional efforts to enroll "underprivileged" students, enrollment of Black students increased and fluctuated, enrolling 20 Black students in 1972 to 10 Black students in 2004. As recent as 2001, 50 Black students were admitted and enrolled at Allegheny, but the College experienced a 50 percent loss in Black student enrollment in 2002 through 2004. The number of Black and Latinx students had increased in recent years to include the recent 308 enrolled full-time in the fall of 2017; however, Allegheny currently remains a predominantly White institution (PWI).

The College's history showed that it had failed to integrate Latinx students. The Latinx presence was glaringly absent from Helmreich's (2005) recollection of the student population and the discrimination section. In Helmreich's recount of the student population and discrimination, he discussed that of religious discrimination, while Latinx students are void in the historical recount of Allegheny College. Although Latinx students are missing from the College's history, it could be reflective of the fact that Latinx students were not matriculating onto college campuses across the United States (Ayala & Chalupa, 2016). Even so, the Latinx population was increasing dramatically and needed to be acknowledged and adequately served. In the past five years, the percentage of Latinxs matriculating to Allegheny increased from 6.2% in 2013 to 8.8% in 2017.

As the number of Latinxs entering Allegheny was increasing, it was important to include Latinx students in programs and services.

The Career Education office at Allegheny College was the specific setting of this inquiry. The expressed mission to support career and life planning process for students; career educators' network with various partners, both on and off campus, to develop internships, job shadowing opportunities, educational programs, and employment leads to help students attain their personal and professional goals. Embedded within the Academic Affairs division, the Career Education office is one of nine offices that make up The Gateway, a centralized consortium of experiential learning offices. Career Education comprises five full-time staff members and four student-workers. Of those full-time staff, the makeup of the office includes four career counselors, three who identify as White and one who identifies as Black. There was also one office manager who was White and all student workers were also White. With a majority White office, it could be deduced that racially minoritized students felt uncomfortable entering the career services space to receive career support they need.

When I arrived to the College in 2015, I was informed that the Career Education office struggled to serve students of color, with few visiting the office to access services. From that point on, I observed very few students of color utilizing or benefiting from services offered by our office. Although I anecdotally observed an increase in the number of students of color in the office while I was there, the office does not maintain demographic data on race and ethnicity to verify this claim. Seeing as though the overall institutional number of Black and Latinx students were low upon my arrival in 2015, it makes sense that the number of minoritized students who utilized the services offered by Career Education was low. Even with the College doubling its Black and Latinx populations as recently as 2017, with 154 students identifying as Black and 154 students

identifying as Latinx, they remain underserved, particularly within Career Education. Much like career service offices across the country, services were offered through a color neutral lens, and it was assumed that services were beneficial to everyone regardless of cultural background. I must indicate here that for the full implementation of this inquiry, I served in the role of Associate Director of Career Education; however, as the program ended on December 4, 2019, it was also my last day of employment with Allegheny College. The closing ceremony of this project was my official last day at Allegheny College.

3.5 Inquiry Approach

To investigate how career services supported Black and Latinx students' postgraduation transition through an intentional intervention, this inquiry took place in the context of a career coaching initiative designed for Black and Latinx students. The Collaborative was initiated in fall 2018. Guided and informed by my epistemology and my inquiry questions, an action research approach was conducted, which aligns with a transformative paradigm as outlined by Mertens (2015).

3.5.1 Action Research

Action research is "a particular way of looking at your practice to check whether it is as you feel it should be" (McNiff, 2013). Its purpose is to solve problems in the purview of the practitioner (Patton, 2002). Action research methodology offers flexibility for the practitioner to

identify and address inequities observed in practice and help to provide solutions to those problems. Action researchers seek immediate action to solve problems as quickly as possible to create change (Patton, 2002). Action research may not be generalizable, depending upon the extent to which the analysis is systematic and the problem it is trying to solve (Patton, 2002), as it typically seeks to improve upon localized issues within the department, organization, community, or, in this case, institution (Patton, 2002). Action research, however, was ideal for this inquiry, as I sought to address racial inequities in postgraduation planning and transition for Black and Latinx students at Allegheny College.

Action research is practitioner research (McNiff, 2013), making it ideal for this problem of practice. van der Meulen (2011) surmised that the methodology of action research is the vehicle that drives theory through and into practice. It is a cyclical process that has a general framework involving the planning (inquiry) for finding what the practitioner wants to improve; the action, which comprises the observations, experiment, and data collection cycle; the reflection and analysis of the data; and the conclusion to which corrections are made and implemented for the next iteration (McNiff, 2013). Although one of the criticisms for action research is its lack of structural framework (Patton, 2002; van der Meulen, 2011), Patton (2002) countered that "there are no perfect research designs" (Patton, 2002, p. 223). Nevertheless, the application of action research creates a learning circle through which the practitioner sees a problem that needs a solution, then works collaboratively to solve the problem, examines the outcomes, improves the process, then puts the work into action for another cycle.

Figure 1. Depiction of Action Research Cycle

This cycle of action research activities for this inquiry looked like the following:

Plan: the plan was executed by identifying a problem within my practice. Through an examination of the literature and my professional observation, a problem within my place of practice crystalized highlighting the lack of purposeful postgraduation transition support for Black and Latinx students. As a result, a career coaching intervention was created to focus on helping Black and Latinx students access and build relationships that will aid in a successful college-to-career transition.

Action: a 6-week career intervention was developed and implemented (see Table 1 for semester schedule) during the fall 2018 semester between October and December. The career coaching intervention comprised three career coaching sessions, three group reflection discussion, and two professional development networking events. The implementation of the Collaborative

involved a two-hour career coaching session broken down by 90-minute coaching sessions and a 30-minute group reflection discussion that took place after each session. The career coaching sessions were facilitated by the alumni using the curriculum developed to inform the career conversations (see Appendix J). Afterwards, group reflection discussions were conducted by me, as the action researcher, to help students process their thoughts on the session topic as well as their emerging notions about their postgraduation plans. The questions for these group interviews can be found in Appendix C.

Analyze: at the completion of the career intervention in December 2018, data from the post-focus group with the students and the one-on-one interviews with the alumni were collected and analyzed to look for themes and patterns to improve the project. The data collection period was tightly constrained between October and December 2018; therefore, analysis and evaluation of the data took place between January and April 2019.

Reflection: upon critical evaluation of the data and signaling understanding of improvement or places for variable improvement to refine the application of the intervention to generate the targeted outcomes, another action plan was revised for implementation for another cycle in a future academic school year. Ideally, the Career Education office wanted to implement this intervention every fall semester.

Conclusion: once the data were analyzed, interpreted, and variables identified to adjust in the next iteration of the intervention, the findings were shared with the Career Education office, Alumni Relations office, IDEAS Center, and the student and alumni participants. In this intervention, the variables identified in action research analysis were those approaches used during the action that could be adjusted to fine-tune the process to help reach the desired outcome.

Although this iteration of the first cycle was on an extremely constrained timeline, with the approval of dissertation committee and the expedited approvals from the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) from the University of Pittsburgh and Allegheny College, the efforts of the intervention met a full iterative cycle of the action research methodology. With the implementation of the action during the fall 2018 semester and the evaluation of the data in the spring 2019 semester, this inquiry only covered one cycle due to its timeline.

3.6 Career Collaborative Project

In response to the discrepancy mentioned regarding racially minoritized students making use of Career Education services, I designed a project that served as a career coaching intervention designed to connect Allegheny College Black and Latinx students with Allegheny alumni of color. This project was an effort to help students access and build social networks. Through the work of the project, the Collaborative aimed to help student participants take stock of the resources they possessed and needed to cultivate a successful postgraduation transition. The Collaborative comprised one group of six Black and Latinx students, which was an appropriate number for small groups (Brown & Lent, 2005; Figler & Bolles, 2007; Luzzo, 2000; Mertens; 2015; Patton, 2002). Regarding small groups, Figler and Bolles (2007) suggested that when developing career interventions for culturally diverse students, small groups were recommended, depending up the depth of process-oriented activities. Because we wanted students to do in-depth, internal reflection, a small group of six students was suited for this project. Three alumni of color served as career coaches to help student participants' access and build their social networks. The alumni career

coaches were facilitators in the Collaborative that guided conversations and provided practical, relevant and timely advice to the students about the postgraduation transition planning process.

The Collaborative was conducted in a hybrid format, including both virtual and face-to-face contact. A total of five video conferencing meetings to include one kick-off, three career coaching sessions, and one culminating session. There were two professional development networking events students were asked to attend. The Collaborative commenced at the start of the fall 2018 semester in October and concluded towards the end of the semester in December. A sample schedule can be found in Table 1 below. The coaching sessions were virtual in which the six student participants gathered together in a classroom room and had a video conference with the alumni coach assigned for that particular coaching session. After the 90 minutes coaching session between the alumni coach and the students, 30 minutes were then spent with me as the action researcher to conduct a group reflection session using the group reflection questions (see Appendix C). As with action research, it is common for the researcher to remain part of the work with the participants (Herr & Anderson, 2015; McNiff, 2013), with prompts selected to align and complement the theme for that session purposefully. A detailed outline breakdown of each session and its objectives are available for review in Appendix J.

Table 1 Semester Timeline

Table 1	
Semester Timeline	
Date	Event
October 10	WestPACS Job and Internship Fair (daytime event) (location: Pittsburgh, PA - transportation provided by Career Education)
October 10	Kickoff to meet alumni career coaches (evening virtual event)
October 16	Session I: Tell Your Story - alumni coaching session (virtual)
November 3	Alumni Council Luncheon (Allegheny)
November 13	Session II: Building Your Network – alumni coaching session (virtual)
November 27	Session III: Grow Your Network – alumni coaching session (virtual)
December 4	Closing event

The Collaborative kickoff took place from 5-7 p.m. in the Collaboratory of Pelletier library located on Allegheny's campus. The Collaboratory is a learning laboratory and multi-functional learning space with the technological capabilities and physical space to house the student participants and accommodate the virtual career conversations with the alumni coaches. The kickoff included food as did the career coaching sessions with the students and their alumni career coaches. During the kickoff students were introduced to the coaches and entire Career Education team so that students could identify this initial set of professionals to be considered part of their support system moving forward. The kickoff was a brief event that lasted 60 minutes; the agenda included introductions and two ice breakers.

The career coaching sessions covered thematic topics associated with the steps necessary to complete the 5-year goal action plan. They covered topics such as Tell Your Story; Build Your Network; and Grow Your Network, though which each topic identified specific student learning outcomes that centered around developing communication and relationship building skills. The coaching-based training was tailored to address the postgraduation planning needs and specific goals of the student participants. By introducing and teaching them about networks, they were able to activate and exercise the know-how of utilizing those resources. A detailed outline of the 5-year goal planning activities can be found in Appendix J.

To add continued depth and learning for the student participants, there were two professional development events students were invited to attend. These professional development networking events were in-person events in which students attended to exercise the tools and techniques gleaned from the coaching sessions with the alumni career coaches.

The two events the student participants were invited to attend included (1) WestPACS, the largest regional job and internship fair and (2) the Allegheny Alumni Council luncheon. The Alumni Council luncheon is an annual event that is hosted by the Alumni Relations office who invite current Allegheny students to come to eat lunch with members of the College's Alumni Council. During the Alumni Council Luncheon event, students had an opportunity to meet their coaches face-to-face.

The career coaching sessions in concert with two professional development networking events, provided students the tools to identify and leverage their social capital resources and exercise career knowledge. This project's approach streamlined and directed its efforts to jumpstart career conversations about the students' transition and postgraduation plans, as well as to deploy the connections that support their efforts.

3.6.1 WestPACS

Student participants were invited to attend the largest, regional, job fair and internship fair in Pennsylvania, The Western Pennsylvania Career Services Association (WestPACs). WestPACS is made up of more than 50 career development professionals representing an array of regional colleges and universities. They come together to coordinate a regional job and internship fair for "college students and graduates from the region" to connect with employers. WestPACS is held twice an academic school year, once in the fall and once in the spring. On average, the job and internship fair hosts approximately 170 - 190 employers and welcomes about 1300 students from two-year and four-year colleges and universities. Students had an opportunity to interact face-to-face with recruiters in a multitude of industries from private, non-profit, and government agencies. The opportunity placed students in the position to research areas that align with their goals after graduation and pursue conversations with professionals in the field. This was an opportunity "to take action on goals and challenge them to seek out developmental opportunities… such as meeting with other professionals" (p. 112, Priest & Donley, 214). Students used this experience at WestPACS as a precipice to explore successful approaches and the challenges associated with approaching employers when navigating conversations with professionals in the field; then share that conversation back to the alumni coach during the coaching sessions.

3.6.2 Alumni Council Luncheon

The second event student participants were invited to attend the Allegheny Alumni Council Luncheon. The 2018 annual fall luncheon occurred during the week when the Alumni Council held its annual meeting. During the luncheon, it is a tradition for the alumni council to encourage

students to have lunch with them and connect with them. The Alumni Relations office hosted this event in collaboration with Career Education which made this event appropriate for student participants to build and expand their social networks.

Additionally, the Alumni Relations office agreed that any alumni participating in this project would also be invited, regardless of their membership on the council. Therefore, participating alumni were invited and encouraged to attend. It created an opportunity for them to become more engaged and connected to the students with whom they coached virtually. Moreover, it created a pipeline between the College and the alumni through which future collaborations with the College could exist.

3.7 Sample

This inquiry used purposive sampling (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) to strategically select students that would provide insight into the inquiry. The criteria for selecting the students include the following: (1) self-identified racially or ethnically as Black/African American and/or Latinx/Hispanic; (2) classified as a rising sophomore, junior, or senior; (3) willing to participate in the project throughout the 6- weeks.

Preferably, participants would have attended the Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development Day event, an inaugural professional development event coordinated by the IDEAS Center (Allegheny's diversity and inclusion office), Career Education, and Alumni Relations, designed for all students of difference. As stated by the announcement promoted by the IDEAS Center (the diversity and inclusion office):

This program is strategically designed to support historically and systemically

underrepresented students (students of color, first-generation, LGBTQ) by providing opportunities to build extensive alumni networks. It is our hope that these important networks can possibly lead to mentoring, internships, shadowing experiences, and possible employment in the future. Most importantly, we hope students will learn about different career paths and hear how alumni have dealt with career challenges, failures, unexpected changes and achieved success. (My Allegheny event post: https://sites.allegheny.edu/my/2018/02/08/diversity-inclusion-professional-development-event/).

The students who attended the diversity and inclusion event were selected because they demonstrated active engagement in their professional development and interests in conversations about life after Allegheny.

Based on the above criteria, there were 78 students identified from the registration list of the Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development Day who were invited to apply to participate in the Collaborative (see Appendix D). In order to narrow down the sample for the Collaborative project, I requested applications (see Appendix E) from participants in the Professional Development Day. Seven participants meeting the criteria and scoring highly on the application rubric (see Appendix F) were offered the opportunity to accept or decline the offer to participate in the project via email (see Appendix G). While it would have been ideal to have several collaborative groups with a greater number of student participants and alumni of color, this undertaking fell under my purview; therefore, the projected number of participants was in keeping with the extent to which I could manage a program of this magnitude with the amount of internal reflection required of the students. In my professional experiences, larger number groups tend to

dilute the effectiveness of the desired outcome of the project, program, or workshop when it comes to self-reflection and authenticity.

The Collaborative design included six student participants with a makeup of Black and Latinx students who were sophomores, juniors, and seniors. A small group of students of color was the best sample for the following reasons: (1) typically career development assessment of student life-span in career decision-making is applied to White students without the consideration of cultural differences and influences on career decision-making process (Brown & Lent, 2005); (2) because racially minoritized students tend to lean on close community and cultural circles for information, including their close family, friends, and community (Luzzo, 2000; Yosso, 2005); and (3) I wanted to foster conversations across campus amongst students of color to help breakdown stigmas and barriers for seeking career assistance and to foster positive perceptions of the career development process.

Table 2 Career Collaborative Project Participants

Career Collaborative Project participants

Name (pseudonym)	Race/Ethnicity	First-Gen	Gender	Graduation Yr
Frank	Black/African American	Yes	Female	2021
Major: Community & Justice Studies; Minor (double): Studio Arts; and Education Studies				
Kanye	Black/ South African	No	Female	2019
Major: Biology; Minor: Global Health Studies				
Angie	Latinx	Yes	Female	2019
Major: Community & Justice Studies; Minor: Education				
Rose	Black/ Non-US Citizen	No	Female	2019
Major (double): Biology and Environmental Science; Minor: Psychology				
Shawn	Black/ African American	No	Female	2019
Major: Biology; Minor: Economics				
Dee	Black/ African American	Yes	Male	2020
Major: Communications; Minor: Political Science				
Alumni (pseudonym)				
Alumni Coach A	Black/ African American	Yes	Female	2002
Major: Communications; Minor: Political Science				
Alumni Coach D	Black/ African American	Yes	Male	2013
Major: Economics				
Alumni Coach R	Latina/Mexican National	Yes	Female	2004
Major: Political Science				

3.7.1 Alumni

The sample also included alumni of color as institutional agents to help students access and build their social networks. Because Allegheny's culture maintains strong connections to its alumni, I utilized this culture of alumni support to engage alumni of color to serve as career coaches for the project. These alumni identified as Black and/or Latinx because it mirrored the demographics of the student participants and the focus of the inquiry. Ideally these alumni (1) reflected the racial/gender makeup of the group (e.g. Black male, Latinx female) and (2) preferably, would have graduated within at least the past 8 – 10 years (e.g. or what would be considered young alumni, according to the Alumni Relations office); unfortunately, two of the

three alumni participants fell outside of the 10-year range. One alumnus graduated in 2002 and the other in 2004. In my professional observation and experience, Allegheny students respond more positively to young professional alumni who can relate to their current experiences and offer advice about life after Allegheny; however, this did not impede the connections between the students and their alumni career coaches. These alumni cultivated professional careers after Allegheny and expressed a readiness to give back to students through mentorship and guidance.

I chose this alumnus make up because, in career development interventions, it is suggested and encouraged to design programs for racially minoritized students with mentors that look like them (Barrett, 2000; Cornelius, 2010; Gardner, 2014; Harper, 2012; Herr, 1993; Luzzo, 2000). Their stake in the problem was significant because they provided guidance and support they felt they gained or lacked when they attended Allegheny. Giving back was a critical motivator in participating in a project of this nature. Priest and Donley (2014) proclaimed that one of their most significant findings in their research regarding the benefits of alumni mentoring was the motivation for participation, to "give back" to students and the institution, or in their case the program through which the alumni participated in college.

Moreover, Allegheny alumni of color benefited from this experience by helping them develop mentoring skills they can use in their own professional lives. Priest and Donley (2014) shares "young alumni … [grow] in their own professional leadership roles and responsibilities" when they mentor college students (p. 19). As they offered students advice and experimental knowledge about the transition into the workplace, they provided unique insight as to what the transition looks like as a person of color. During the project, they had opportunities to reflect on lessons learned, then offer support and advice on what they could have done better. At the end of

our work together, they identified needing a program like the Collaborative when they were in college.

3.7.2 Latinx Students

The self-identified Latinx population of students at Allegheny continues to increase. In 2013, they made up 6.2% of the student body. As of 2017, they made up 8.8% of full-time enrolled students. There were 131 full-time enrolled Latinx students in 2013 and 154 full-time enrolled in the fall of 2017. Before then, Latinx student numbers were abysmal for incoming First-Year students, representing 0 in the fall of 2000, enrolling eight in the fall of 2001, then consistently low numbers followed from 2002 through fall of 2008. However, beginning in 2009, a significant jump occurred with 30 incoming Latinx First-Year students starting a slow, but a consistent upward trajectory. As of fall 2016, the count of Latinx First-Year students was reported at 60.

Looking at the data from the Allegheny Institutional Research office, Latinx students' year-two retention percentages increased from 75% from 2000-2002 to 82% from 2014-2016. While it was a positive development to see that Latinx students were being retained and graduating from Allegheny at an increased rate than in previous years, there must be concern about their postgraduation transition. They have the same high career aspirations as their White counterparts, yet somehow are not securing those positions. Berrios-Allison (2011) stated that while the Latinx population is entering and graduating from college, "they continue to be concentrated in unskilled, service-oriented, clerical, and midlevel technical occupations" (p. 80). As it continues to be relevant that they are not securing gainful and meaningful employment after graduation, participation in this project was beneficial to them.

3.7.3 Black Students

Allegheny College's self-identified Black student population sprouted from 11 First-Year students in the fall of 2000 to 57 in the fall of 2016. Their year-two retention rates varied over the past 16 years, starting at 67% between the fall semesters of 2000 and 2002, and 80% for the fall semesters of 2014 and 2016, with a 91% peak in the fall of 2009 to 2011, then a drastic decline the following fall semester at 84%, then down to 80% in 2011 to 2013, and further down the following year to 77% in 2012 to 2014. Black students potentially struggle to stay afloat under the cultural pressures of surviving on a PWI campus with services and programs designed to support those that do not look like them or have the same needs for success as their White counterparts.

3.7.4 Recruitment

Working in conjunction with the offices of diversity and inclusion and alumni relations, we identified engaged students and alumni who participated in a previous diversity and inclusion professional development day where minoritized students were invited to attend workshops, talks, and one-on-one sessions conducted by alumni of color. With the support of my supervisor, I emailed student participants to invite them to apply for the project, highlighting the purpose of the project, its target audience, why they were selected to apply, the project duration, and how it would serve the essence of my research (see Appendix G). I requested that they complete a Google Form application (see Appendix E). Then, I emailed an invitation to the alumni to gather participants to serve as career coaches (see Appendix F). The director of Career Education and I reviewed the applications, which included a short essay allowing students to express why this project would be

beneficial to them then scored their application responses in a student applicant evaluation form (see Appendix F).

3.8 Data Collection

Through the Collaborative, I collected qualitative data utilizing three methods: (1) post focus group interview with the student participants, (2) one facilitated group reflection session after each virtual career coaching session, which totaled three group reflection session, and (3) one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with the three alumni career coaches. I chose this approach to gain an understanding of how the development of this project would help racially minoritized students actively access and engage social network resources to support their postgraduation transition.

Glense (2011) found that group interviews (i.e. focus groups) are "particularly useful in action and evaluation research where participants can experience multiple perspectives on a similar experience such as the implementation of a particular [project]" (p. 130). Focus groups are facilitated discussions among a select group of people, approximately 6-12, to discuss a particular topic (Glesne 2011). This conversation, or group interview, is a conversation that relies on the interaction between participants to create multiple perspectives (Mertens, 2015). After the last career coaching session of this project, a post-focus group interview was conducted to gather their knowledge, experience, and confidence levels of the students, as it pertained to accessing and expanding their social networks (protocol in Appendix B). The post focus group used a 60-minute, semi-structured, open-ended format that allowed flexible interaction between the students. The objective of the focus group was to understand their level of awareness of their postgraduation

plans and any barriers that may be concerning them. Ultimately, this approach offered in-depth understanding of student participants' insights, experiences, and perceptions about their postgraduation transition after participating in the project.

Additionally, interviews were conducted with each of the alumni career coaches. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were employed with alumni career coaches for approximately 45-60 minutes at the end of the project in order to gain their perspectives of their experiences and opinions about the Collaborative intervention (Mintrop, 2015). To see the protocol for these interviews, please see Appendix D. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight on their attitudes and reflections about supporting students of color with their college-to-career transition from Allegheny. The interviews revealed existing gaps where Allegheny fell short in supporting the postgraduation goals of Black and Latinx students. The purpose of using the open-ended interview was to ensure that each alumni career coach was asked the same questions. The semi-structure allowed flexibility for them to add depth to their response and opportunity for me to probe when certain themes and topics arise.

3.9 Data Analysis

The examination of the data was conducted using a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is "a method for recognizing and organizing patterns in content and meaning in qualitative data" (Willig, 2013, p. 57). It is the process through which themes were allowed to emerge from the data and documented by the researcher. Willig (2013) addressed thematic analysis' criticisms of not having to commit to an epistemological orientation; however, stressed that "thematic analysis …requires theoretical and epistemological commitments from the researcher" (p.58). Willig

(2013) furthered, as a researcher with a transformative approach to this inquiry, that thematic analysis created theoretical flexibility at the same time encouraged the researcher to work within an epistemological and theoretical framework, or the process would be meaningless. Because my work positioned me "consciously and explicitly side by side with the less powerful in a joint effort to bring about social transformation" (Mertens, 2015, p. 21), this type of analytic approach left room for the data to form patterns and themes in order to create categories for analysis.

Furthermore, I incorporated a hybrid approach to the method of thematic analysis. This analysis employed both an inductive and deductive approach to the data. Both data-driven approaches, inductive and deductive allowed me the guidance and flexibility to interpret the data as it unveiled itself to me along with offer direction for the perspective. Meaning, the inductive approach allotted the flexibility for the data to reveal theme outside of the theoretic framework, yet the deductive theoretic method created boundaries through which those new themes were interpreted. Fereday and Muir-Cocharane (2006) used this hybrid approach into their study demonstrating the rigor of thematic analysis. Much like Fereday and Muir-Cocharane (2006), this approach complemented the inquiry questions "by allowing the tenets of [social capital theory] to be integral to the process of deductive thematic analysis while allowing for themes to emerge direct[ly] from the data using inductive coding" (p. 83).

Deductive analysis is described as a method of coding supported by a theoretical or conceptual framework (Miles et al., 2014). This coding approach helped provide a "start list" of codes for the researcher as it is derived from the theoretical framework applied in the study. For this inquiry, for instance, Coleman's (1988) identified some constructs within the transference of social capital that helped start the list of codes for the analysis process. For example, when two people purposefully establish relationships, social interactions facilitate some form of social

capital transference. Just as Miles et al. (2014) suggested, as the data emerged with patterns, similarities, relationships, and themes, having the "start list" of codes helped clarify the answers to my inquiry questions. To demonstrate what researchers, consider successful transference of social capital resources, I looked for tenets in the theory that indicated action and could be observed or understood. Deductive coding terms included terms such as trustworthiness and expectation; information channels; and norms and effective sanctions. These terms were either supported or unsupported in the analysis of the data which helped provide an opportunity to utilize inductive coding.

The inductive coding process involved will let "themes … emerge from … an analysis firmly grounded in data and do not reflect the researcher's theoretical commitment." (Fereday & Muir-Cocharane, 2006, p. 60). This was relevant and important to this inquiry because the inductive coding approach "capture[d] [buried] meanings, and also… [made] connections between themes and [drew] conclusions about the phenomenon under investigation" that emerged outside the theoretic framework (Fereday & Muir-Cocharane, 2006, p. 60). The freedom associated with this approach gave good balance for the deductive thematic analysis as it caught nuances, themes, and patterns not accounted for in the "start list" of deductive coding.

This data analysis approach captured reoccurring and emerging themes that addressed the inquiry questions: (1) how does a career program aimed to help racially minoritized students access and build social networks support their postgraduation transition? (2) How do institutional agents help racially minoritized students build social networks? The inductive and deductive thematic analysis organized the data in the beginning but also allowed the capture of novel themes when they emerged from the analysis. Willig (2013) surmised "theoretically derived, a priori codes and newly emerging themes are … integrated in order to generate a comprehensive thematic

description of the data" (p. 60). From this stage of the analysis major themes were identified to develop an explanatory framework that made meaning of the phenomenon explored.

Following the data collection of one student-participant focus group, three student-participant group reflections interviews, and three alumni interviews, the group and individual interviews were transcribed via a secure professional online audio transcription service and manually coded with printed transcripts with wide margins to allow for note-taking and memoing. This process entailed three initial passes at the data highlighting text associated with assigned code and color of the highlighter (Miles et al., 2014; Saldana, 2016). As I reviewed the transcripts, I highlighted significant statements that provided insight into the students' thoughts and feelings associated with the postgraduation transition and how they communicate their plans with others. As the data emerged, I found incorporated several coding strategies such as In Vivo and Holistic (Saldana, 2016) coding to capture quotes, phrasings, and feeling expressed by the participants. I refined the data iteratively using index cards to reduce and collapse codes and watch for emerging themes, then interpreting the data closely for specific details then broadly for thematic uncovering. The results of this process are discussed in-depth in the findings and discussion chapters of this report. There is a sample matrix of my analysis process located in Appendix L.

3.10 Limitations of the Approach

This section identifies the limitations related to my methods and approach. Patton (2002) states that "the quality of qualitative data depends to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher" (p. 5). Meaning, no matter which qualitative method was chosen for this inquiry, it required "generating useful and credible qualitative findings

through… discipline, knowledge, training, practice, creativity, and hard work" (p. 5). Focus groups, as Glesne (2011) recognizes, are limited for in-depth probing and do not allow for easy confidentially or ease in conversation; however, Mertens (2015), argues that the method elicits more participants' points of view than a "researcher-dominated" interview. To evoke these points of view from the participants in order to generate credible data, the researcher must maintain a high level of skill, sensitivity, knowledge, and integrity. In an effort to generate credible data, open-ended questions were asked to allow students' concerns and interests to surface, and proved to be a broader lens for me to address the inquiry question.

While qualitative action research does not have hard and fast rules on the selection of sample size, it is relatively common for researchers to scale sample selection based on the topic of the research; anywhere from one to four or more participants, depending up the perspective of the depth of knowledge and differentiated insight needed for the study (Efron, 2013). In which case the sample size for this inquiry would not be considered a limitation; however, in this inquiry the scope of sample targeted Black and Latinx who initially participated in the Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development Day event because those students expressed a degree of motivation and commitment when they reserved a spot to attend the event. Ideally, this would be open to all Black and Latinx students who might not have had the opportunity to attend the Diversity and Inclusion event. There could have been limitations to why some students did not attend the professional development day (e.g. conflicting games, schedules, other club commitments), yet there are always limitations to inquiries, and I believe the directed sampling strategy ideal for this project. However, for the purposes of this inquiry, the students who participated in the Diversity and Inclusion event was the type of student who was better suited for the limited amount of time available for this inquiry.

Regarding the approach to the study using action research, which is steeped in the tenets of its inclusive, collaborative, and transformational work, I am aware of one limitation that might be of concern. It would be the short period in which the project was implemented. This did not allow an opportunity to observe, analyze, and improve for another iteration as is common in action research (McNiff, 2013). The action research process is cyclical and is grounded in observing, reflecting, and acting for improvement. Since this iteration was only six weeks in one semester, there was an opportunity to reflect, correct and re-implement the project, unless the Career Education director decides to implement the project further than the intended research in the following semester. It is good to note here that the director expressed high hopes for this intervention and wished to continue it if this study indicated that students found value in the experience. Further, in an effort to extend the action research cycle beyond the inquiry, I followed-up with the participants to avail myself to questions and resources to help them continue to connect to alumni for the purposes of professional and career growth.

3.10.1 Trustworthiness

Mertens (2015) warns that transformative researchers must avoid bias in the data collection process; therefore, the reflexivity expressed potentially informed my judgment when interpreting the data. In order to account for any biases in processing and analyzing the data, I employed multiple approaches to avoid the biases stemming from the inquiry (Miles et al., 2014). Miles et al. (2014) suggest triangulating with several data collection methods. The post-focus group and the group reflections sessions helped maintain data integrity.

When I felt as if I was being misled, I followed-up with the participant to clarify responses and ask for clarifying details to glean meaning and intention for the response (Miles et al., 2014).

This is common practice in counseling, so I was accustomed to reconciling information that sounded as if it was misleading or missing information. To further check my bias, Miles et al. (2014) suggested sharing my transcripts or notes with a colleague. In this case, I shared my transcriptions with the students, alumni, and Career Education supervisor so that they could pinpoint places in the data where I might be misled or "co-opted." Lastly, as instructed by Miles et al. (2014), I kept my inquiry questions firmly in mind when researching to keep me on task and away from drifting towards "more dramatic or momentous event" (p. 298).

3.11 Conclusion

I used an action research approach to explore how a career services program, the Collaborative, helped and supported racially minoritized students navigate the postgraduation transition process, looking specifically at how institutional agents aid accessing and building social networks. This approach was appropriate to address the phenomenon within my place of practice and to help mitigate the struggles of postgraduation transition for racially minoritized students. My data sources, collected in collaboration with participants through action research, were integral to examining my inquiry questions. My reflexivity as a historically racially minoritized person, Student Affairs professional, higher education administrator, and career services practitioner, along with my transformative worldview were crucial to executing this project.

4.0 Findings

This chapter presents findings from interviews, both group and individual, with six Allegheny students of color and three Alumni of color who participated in the Collaborative, a career intervention project designed to help Black and Latinx students access and build their social networks. In these interviews, I sought to understand how students demonstrated, described, or conceptualized their access to social networks using institutional agents such as alumni of color as career coaches. In the first section, I outline how racially minoritized students access and build social networks. Though many students reported having some variation of postgraduation plans, they expressed not having the necessary methods or steps to activate their plan. In the second section, I unveil how alumni of color, as institutional agents, helped students build their social networks. The data revealed that approaches from the three alumni resulted in different outcomes for students regarding their construction of networks.

4.1 Helping Racially Minoritized Students Access and Build Social Networks

To understand if the participating students were engaged in thinking about their lives after graduation, I wanted to discover their thoughts and feelings regarding their postgraduation plans. It was also an effort to clarify and identify any particular barriers or challenges with which they were most concerned about regarding the transition from college into the workforce. In this section I outline the following four themes: (1) sharing attitudes towards postgraduation transition; (2) self-reflecting and thinking critically; (3) recognizing support systems, and; (4) discovering the

significance of the Career Collaborative Project in sharing resources. These themes worked together to describe how this inquiry project helped students access and build their social networks to support their postgraduation transition.

4.1.1 Sharing Attitudes Towards Postgraduation Transition

Throughout this process, the students' states of mind about the college-to-career transition and their postgraduation plans developed. Whether it manifested through thoughts of trepidation and uncertainty, or self-assurance, it was clear that the idea of transitioning from college was something to be addressed. Sophomores, juniors, and seniors alike, in this inquiry, expressed some form of apprehension about the process, even if they recognized that they were reasonably confident. In one instance, Shawn (senior, Black female) shared, "I am generally pretty confident. Coming into this program, I am typically not the type to ask for help, [but] just because I don't ask for help, doesn't mean I don't want it." While Shawn (senior, Black female) acknowledged a self-assurance in her response, she also revealed an unwillingness to ask for help, which could be interpreted as a form of reservation or unease. She revealed that although she did not ask for help, it did not mean she did not want help, but had hesitancy for acting. Later she shared that she did not know what specific persons to ask. This hesitancy towards postgraduation transition and planning seemed to surface both explicitly or implicitly throughout the Collaborative project.

After the first career coaching session, I sat with the student participants to talk about any discoveries, thoughts or feelings that became apparent in the session regarding their postgraduation plans. Dee (junior, Black male student), quickly responded, "I am scared I won't find a job or find one I am not passionate about. Nervous." Angie (senior, Latina female student), the first in her family to go to college, similarly said, "I didn't know how I felt about taking a gap year. People

were like, 'no.'" The people to which she was referring often included her family members, specifically her mother and older brother. This messaging signaled to Angie (senior, Latina female) if she stopped the momentum of her journey to success, it would somehow indicate impending failure or an inability to get back on track to gain career success and stability. She was ultimately connoting the idea that a "gap year" would be a mistake.

Following this first career coaching session, the students seemed relatively reserved in their responses. Perhaps they were becoming aware of their internal concerns, or the session created internal turmoil that was not yet present. Either way, the students were seemingly not as vocal as they would become later on throughout the project, and it appeared that they were processing the session, the project, and themselves within it. It is good to note that during our conversation, the students and I discussed how the idea of taking a year break after graduation was not uncommon. We clarified that taking a "gap year," or an "enrichment year," was not unusual. I explained how students typically use their time within that year of exploration and transition to prepare for the next stage of their lives. Students who take an "enrichment year" may choose to search for opportunities to gain more work experience and build soft skills, or take some down (Flowers, 2015). The Allegheny student culture was such that students would take that time to prepare for professional or graduate school entrance. Teachable moments like this one with Angie (senior, Latina female) frequently occurred throughout the Collaborative.

Although the students seemed to be slightly reserved in their demeanor and responses after the first career coaching session, they said they gained real insight from Alumni Coach D (Black male). The students shared that his session was authentic and that he encouraged them to follow their passions no matter what. During our one-on-one interview, Alumni Coach D (Black male) shared his perspective on his intention to be authentic; he said he tried to be as transparent as

possible because students have a fantasized idea of what successful alumni's lives are like. He said, "[I wanted to] humanize [myself] as someone, as an alumni, just say, 'Hey, everything isn't perfect. Life isn't a straight-line trajectory, so be confident because we've all been in the same shoes as you, and we're feeling the exact same way, you'll be fine, too.'" In this way, while the students seemed a little nervous about their postgraduation plans, Alumni Coach D (Black male) assured them that the process has its ups and downs, but ultimately things work out for the best. He did this by sharing his story with them where he revealed that there was a life-altering experience that happened during his junior year. This experience could have caused him to leave school, but he had faculty and staff support that helped him continue and overcome his tremendous obstacle. Hence, his message to them was to follow their passions, and challenges are normal, but things will be okay. Throughout the Collaborative students reiterated this "no matter what, it will be okay" mantra.

After expressing his initial feelings of nervousness about life after Allegheny, Dee (junior, Black male student) expanded his sentiments when I asked him about his thoughts and feelings associated with preparing for postgraduation. He said,

> My first semester, I didn't even want to think about after college. I didn't want to think about, I knew what I wanted to do, but I just [didn't] want to think about [it]. I didn't know how I was going to get there. How I was going to make these connections and everything, and how to manage the alumni network. I didn't want to do that.

Most of the students showed some similar signs of apprehension about their postgraduation plans; however, Shawn (senior, Black female), on the surface, did not. Shawn (senior, Black female), one of four seniors in the Collaborative, was a pre-health biology major going into the physical therapy field after graduation. Sharing her perspective of the Alumni Council Luncheon,

69

a networking event the students and coaches were invited to attend hosted by the Alumni Relations office, she acknowledged,

> I came with the mindset thinking; I'm not really sure why I'm here [alumni networking event] because this is not pre-health… but then, when I was at the table with two men it was just so ironic that they…both fit so perfectly…one in the sense for what is [currently happening on campus] and my position on student government; and the other one in terms of what I want to do either during graduate school or after graduate school.

Opportunities like this allowed students such as Shawn (senior, Black female), who felt as though they had a solid plan of action, a moment of reflection. It was an opportunity to uncover how connections could be helpful beyond only career connections and could extend to other areas of life interests. In terms of networking and building networks, for Shawn (senior, Black female), this experience at the alumni networking function helped create a broader mindset. The alumni networking luncheon helped move her from initial resistance to wanting to take action, in a space that she assumed would not be beneficial.

Throughout our conversations together, students' confidence levels continued to grow. Whether they were fairly confident before or after this project, similar to Shawn (senior, Black female) or Kanye (senior, Black female), another senior (Black female student), there were certainly some self-proclamations of strength gained. Kanye (senior, Black female) said,

> I've always struggled getting help from other people…people always come to me for help. And having to turn around and ask for help is a really challenging aspect that I'm going to have to actually be forced to ask for help, and this forces me to ask for help… it basically pushes me to go out and talk to people about the things that I'm looking at and the things that I want.

In order for the project to help students access and build networks, I had to first understand their attitudes toward the postgraduation process. It was vital to understand where they were in the thought processes for postgraduation planning before I could challenge, encourage, and support their development of more positive attitudes toward postgraduation transition.

4.1.2 Self-reflecting and Thinking Critically

During a side conversation just before we started one of the after-session group interviews, Frank (sophomore, Black female), shared with me that this project, the Collaborative, required a great deal of internal work. Internal work is seemingly the evaluative process in which a person starts to assess their impending transition and the resources and relationships available to them to help them move through the transition successfully (Schlossberg & Chickering, 1989). And while she liked it and knew it had to be done, she was not prepared for it. Preparation for life after college takes a great deal of internal reflection and realizations about how to move forward, and how to take the next step. Even self-assured Shawn (senior, Black female) learned this lesson during the second career coaching session with Alumni Coach R (Latina female). Shawn (senior, Black female) said that while she understood and enjoyed the networking lesson of the session, she had other concerns starting to develop. She said, "I'm doing a lot of self-reflecting. [Alumni Coach R] talked about characteristics and things you can work on… How do [I] step back real quick and just say, 'Is this me?'" She was referring to a part of the conversation in the session about body language, both verbal and nonverbal communication. This conversation lent itself to a more in-depth conversation rooted in how she maneuvers in majority White spaces as primarily the only Black person, specifically the only Black female. While this discussion did not focus on networking directly, it gave insight as to how race creates interference with the ability to connect

71

to the majority White. Shawn's (senior, Black female) self-reflection allowed for the opportunity to acknowledge and confirm the importance of networking but also sparked conversation and reflection associated with managing stereotypes that White people have of Black people. This was one of the few moments when the students delved into the notion that race affected their ability to accomplish their goals. At that point, the notion of race did not organically emerge in the conversation, but rather came up as the question was posed to the group, suggesting that they were not thinking about race actively until they participated in the Collaborative.

In responding to the same question regarding the session with Alumni Coach R (Latina female) and students moving towards their goals, Angie (senior, Latina female) shared what she felt networking was, stating,

> Getting yourself out of your comfort zone… because you getting out of your comfort zone is scary. And you don't like to be uncomfortable, but in order to grow, you have to go through those phases because that's when you start to discover things that you never knew about yourself.

With this response, I probed further to find out how it felt being placed in a position to have the time to be pushed outside the comfort zone and to do the internal work to which Frank (sophomore, Black female) said, "for me, it's scary and overwhelming, but good because I know I can." She was acknowledging that she was confronting ideas about life after Allegheny that she knew she had to address, yet was not willing to until she joined the Collaborative. Kanye (senior, Black female), responding to the same question, shared what having space and time to think about postgraduation plans and the execution of those goals felt like.

[This program] gives me a chance to really sit and think about what it is that I want outside of family expectations, outside of what is supposed to happen in terms of what happens after people graduate and their ways of going through life.

I noticed that there were times when the theme of managing others expectations was weighted heavily on the minds of some of the students. Kanye (senior, Black female), Angie (senior, Latina female), and Frank (sophomore, Black female), in particular, struggled with managing outside expectations and hopes of family. However, while this perspective was important to the conversation overall, it did not emerge in the analysis as a major theme for the students en masse. Angie (senior, Latina female) will now be the first to graduate from college. She described her family as saying, "Oh, she's going to make it!" She expressed that the pressure overwhelmed her a bit, "I'm like, hold on. Don't expect me to come out and have all the answers because I don't even know what that looks like." Moments such as this revealed so much more about their stories than I could have hypothesized about their needs; however, it does demonstrate the desire for time and space to develop a course of action for life after college, and with specific guidance. Angie (senior, Latina female) shared, "[you have to] set goals and refocus goals you forgot because you just want to be done [with school]."

As students embarked upon the postgraduation planning and setting goals process within the Collaborative, they expressed a willingness to do the internal reflection and self-examination needed to take stock in how to move forward, and how to take the next steps. The willingness to look inside and assess their plans and how to execute them took critical thinking. Students investing in critical thinking early on in their academic career can help them utilize the same skilled-process throughout their lives when composing plans to reach out to people to help them achieve their goals.

4.1.3 Recognizing Support Systems

After the career coaching session three, during the group interview, the students were asked to describe how they connect with their family, friends, and campus mentors to share their postgraduation plans. After an engaged debate on identifying who and the purpose for sharing this information, Dee (junior, Black male) stated, "everyone knows someone." However, it took some time for the group to work towards this consensus. They thought and spoke about different people (e.g. faculty, alumni, staff) with whom they would consider sharing their plans before coming to one accord. During this conversation, I sought to understand if the students could name systems of support they could access when they needed to access them. Shawn (senior, Black female) quickly and confidently replied, "I feel like the people that I'm connected with, specifically here at the school, faculty, professors, and [others] at my internship at Columbia, I think they've helped me… just me introducing myself and them actually listening to me… [if] people will actually listen to you and remember things about you that's very specific about what you said, that means a lot." In response to the same question, Kanye (senior, Black female) said, "Now that I actually [think about it], friends… they have networks as well." After pondering this very thought, she finished, "Everybody has a network." At that moment, they thought about who had networks.

However, there was one outlier, while Frank (sophomore, Black female), the only sophomore, understood whom to connect with for help, career help specifically, when asking a similar question during the post-focus group session, she, answered definitively, "I don't like to

tell people my dreams or anything like that because I don't want to hear their negativity and piss me off. I only share it with people I know I won't get a negative response from." This answer was entirely different from previous session conversations. Frank (sophomore, Black female) continued to stand firm in her decision to not share her goals or dreams with anyone, particularly her family. She shared with the group that her family expected her to pick a profession and stick with that track and stay in that direction. This feedback made her apprehensive about sharing her ideas with anyone she deemed oppositional, to include sharing with friends who might find her goals too lofty and might present an air of perceived negativity or criticism.

Once this idea took root in the conversation, it brought forth more examples of how they had connected with friends and family members of friends in the past. They began to identify moments in their lives where networking happened organically. Dee (junior, Black male) shared a story of how he and his friend's parents connected during a spring break trip to New York City where his friend's parents put him in touch with someone in marketing sales. Angie (senior, Latina female) shared a story about her connecting other students to one another, and Frank (sophomore, Black female) having the connections with her friend's mother if she wanted to talk to someone about the field of education. At this moment, I could see notions, moments, and ideas of what it was for them to identify a system of networks.

This seemed to be an "aha" moment for them. A sudden realization, insight, and comprehension that networks could be found in various webs of relationships with people. It was not that the students did not want to access their networks before, even though Dee (junior, Black male) did express that he did not want to deal with thinking about it when he was a freshman; however, it seemed as though they were not aware of networks in totality. They were aware that alumni were an avenue for building networks, yet relegated their friends and family outside of that

realm of possibility. The purpose for this probe was to stretch their thoughts around whom they could consider when assessing their level of support for working towards their goals, not just in the near future for postgraduation planning, but long-term skills needed to navigate the workforce.

4.1.4 Discovering the Significance of the Career Collaborative Project

Although this project created space to do internal work, decision-making, balancing demands, goal-setting, and offered room for clarity, when asked if the Collaborative met their expectations for postgraduation preparation, most students said they had no expectation of the project. However, Rose (senior, Black female) said that the project did not do much for her. She said, "I pretty much was already set and I'm still sitting in the same way as [I] already came into this… I already knew it." Yet she continued to describe what she did receive from the project.

> It [did] remind me of some little stuff that I can do to increase my chances now and in the future. So, like updating my LinkedIn page like little stuff that I haven't quite done yet. So [the project] just kind of reminded me of all those little steps I can do to help with the whole process… It's just little stuff that can help you a lot more than you think because you forget about them, you know.

Although Rose (senior, Black female) felt she did not receive much from the Collaborative, admittedly she described a genuine tactic taught by the alumni career coach, career professionals, and used by industry professionals to stay connected to one another. Reconnecting with professionals from times and opportunities before, or in her case past research professors, happens to be one of the "little" things that aid in network building. Hence, it was interesting to recognize the disconnect in her feedback. While this particular sentiment was reflective of Rose's (senior, Black female) perspective, a standard view amongst the students was that some were unsure and

unclear as to why they participated in the project, but overall, they were thankful that they had participated.

For example, Angie (senior, Latina female) said she had no expectations because "I wasn't sure. I know I wanted to do something." She knew that as a graduating senior, it was time for her to take action. Angie (senior, Latina female) continued, "I feel like being here [in this program] is kind of that process of getting out of your comfort zone. It's almost like shaking things up, but shaking them in a way that is going to enlighten you and kind of open another pathway instead of closing them."

When other participants were asked about their experience in the Collaborative as it pertained to executing their plans, similar to Rose (senior, Black female) and Shawn (senior, Black female), Dee (junior, Black male) acknowledged that as a junior, he had goals upon entering the project; however, the project gave him the steps and methods to move forward. He said, "I had goals [already], but it gave [me] more confidence to know the exact plan that I wanted…this program has taught me to use your resources that are here for you… to better prepare you."

Collectively, there seemed to be a sense of comfort and relief that students had an action plan and the methods to engage them, as Kanye (senior, Black female) said. When asked about experiences in the Collaborative as it pertained to preparing and executing their postgraduation plans, she aptly stated, "Well, it gave me plans to execute!" It was a demonstrated level of excitement and confidence that emerged quickly over the brief three session career coaching project. She said that the Collaborative "gave me specific things to keep my eye out for, exit goals…I also know who to talk to in order to accomplish these goals and the importance of networking has definitely been solidified in my time in this program."

Consistent with the perspectives of most of the students, Angie (senior, Latina female) said, "Now, I feel better. I have a clear goal." In keeping with this sentiment, Dee (junior, Black male) shared that he would have liked this type of program available during his first-year. Whatever the case, Frank (sophomore, Black female), the only sophomore in the group, realized something poignant about the entire process, as she stated, "I learned how to lose control throughout this [program]. [And I also] learned that even with seniors sitting next to me, they still don't have their shit together." Frank (sophomore, Black female) was correct, that even seniors do not have their "stuff" together. There is room for growth, learning, and preparing for life after graduation for racially minoritized students. Career education offices must maintain intentionality and presence in order for students to see career services as a partner in that transition.

4.2 Institutional Agents Helping Racially Minoritized Students

A key aspect of this project was the use of alumni of color as institutional agents. Institutional agents are people who possess some authority and who can advocate on behalf of minoritized students. Specifically, they "act to directly transmit, or negotiate the transmission of highly valued resources" (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, p. 1067). For the purposes of this inquiry, the alumni coaches were situated intentionally through the career invention to negotiate and share highly valued resources with the students. Within this inquiry, I sought to understand to what degree could alumni of color, as institutional agents, help Black and Latinx students identify, access, and build their social networks. In this section, I explore two main themes that emerged through this process. The themes are guided by two theories, including institutional agent theory forwarded by Stanton-Salazar (2011) and social capital theory expanded by Coleman (1988), who

both suggested that social structures and relationships create an opportunity for the transference of social capital. In this case, the transference would be the knowledge and skill to access and build social networks for the Black and Latinx students participating in this career intervention.

4.2.1 Connecting to Alumni of Color as Institutional Agents

When students were asked to describe whether they thought connections with alumni of color were significant, the overwhelming response was that they were vital. According to the students, connecting with alumni of color evokes a sense of familiarity and comfort. The coaches revealed how they created this feeling. Alumni Coach D (Black male) shared that his approach to the students was first and foremost to be transparent. He said he wanted them to understand that "Life isn't a straight-line trajectory, so be confident because we've all been in the same shoes as you, and we're feeling the exact same way, so don't feel like you're unique within the process because you'll be fine, too."

What Alumni Coach D (Black male) established with the students was a level of trustworthiness that Coleman (1988) described as one of the tenets of the social structure needed in order for the successful transference of social resources to happen. In their feedback, particularly about Alumni Coach D (Black male), the students indicated that the coaches were genuine and authentic. Establishing trust with the students was necessary for the coaches to do in order for their instruction and lessons to be heard. This type of transparency was consistent with the coaches throughout the project.

During our conversation, Alumni Coach R (Latina female) expressed her genuine desire to be available for the students, not just in the moment of the Collaborative, but anytime, even after the project was complete. This was something all of the coaches expressed to me during my

coaches training sessions with them. They wanted it to be transparent with the students that their support for them would be available well after their sessions with them. Alumni Coach R (Latina female) said,

I genuinely want to be there [for the students]. It means having the objective of helping and making sure that you connect and prop individuals up [for success] … I want individuals of color to have the same access, the same abilities, the same resources. You need to provide guidance where there is none…I think that there's value, especially when it comes from somebody that looks like you and has walked a similar path as you. Being a mentor means providing guidance and support whenever I can, and using my experience and networks to help guide someone else.

Alumni Coach R's (Latina female) statement about having the objective of helping and connecting students props them up for success. This is indicative of the action needed to ensure the students were being prepared to receive the information needed to help them begin to access their networks and someone dedicated to helping them build those networks.

When asked what it meant to be a mentor, Alumni Coach A (Black female) offered that "my only goal [was I] wanted to be helpful in some way, shape, or form." As for Alumni Coach D (Black male), he said that being a mentor provided a sense of pride for him. "It's something I've prided myself on … I think Allegheny was a place that changed my life for the better… I wanted to be the opportunity to do it for folks that are disadvantage like myself." This point of view is important because it established the motivation of the alumni to be utilized as institutional agents. It demonstrates a desire to create relationships with the students to teach them the skills and techniques to create a network for themselves. In this profound comment from Alumni Coach D (Black male), he shared, "I tried to bring …confidence. Hopefully, they can go out and proactively

activate a network for themselves and speak with knowing that they are going to be fine and they can do it." The sentiments here reverberated during the conversations conducted with the students. Through Alumni Coach D's (Black male) work, his approach provided real-world conversations that normalized fears and anxieties for the students. In his effort to build their confidence, he wanted them to become proactive in activating a network for themselves. While he did not necessarily share his personal networks, he empowered the students to have the know-how and courage to do themselves.

Each coach approached their ideas for helping students build social networks differently from one another. The approaches seemed to range from real-world talks about dreams, passions, failure, and the wherewithal to anticipate challenges and weather them, then emerge from them victorious. They also used practical and tactical teachings on how to reach out to a person you do not know and express how to ask for help, to a full-scale training on how to employ social media to engage in social network building. Yet they all strive to create knowledge and access to channels the students were not previously exposed to or needed a refresher on.

4.2.2 Educating Students on Basic Communication Skills

When students were asked what their main takeaway from the Collaborative was, they said primarily the steps and methods to help articulate and put their plans into action. Ultimately, from my observation, this provided them the confidence to reach out to others and start conversations to build relationships and networks. To demonstrate one lesson gained from Alumni Coach A's (Black female) coaching session, Kanye (senior, Black female) said, "One of the things that … stood out is 'help me help you,' so when you are reaching out to people, you need to tell them how

they can help you because otherwise, they don't know what to do." Furthering this example, Shawn (senior, Black female) described,

> I think Alumni Coach A (Black female) did give an example of how you should phrase [the email]. That stood out to me too [be]cause I was thinking about myself and I'm like, 'Oh, my goodness." I'm so independent asking for help. She talk[ed] about mentorship in addition to the 'help me, help you' aspect and I was just like, that spoke to me personally. I was like, "You're right. I should do that. I will do that.

> When asking Alumni Coach A (Black female) about her "help me, help you" perspective, she stated, "I think that's one of those things that makes it hard when people try to start networking, if they reach out to people and they don't get a response that they want back… it's not because the person doesn't want to help; they just don't know how." These lessons taught students the steps, the intricate details as to how to initiate the synergy between two people, particularly someone they may reach out to seek knowledge or ask for help. This type of information is high-value information for students who may not have had it before or shared with them in unambiguous terms.

Alumni Coach R (Latina female) concurred Alumni Coach A's (Black female) lesson, primarily supporting the notion that students need to learn the basics of how to talk to people they do not know but should talk to about their postgraduation plans. Alumni Coach R (Latina female) said,

> I think that if you prepare students to learn how to write professional emails or casual emails, and if you teach students and role play with students on what to do, just basic conversations, getting to know a stranger, it'll go a long way because practice makes perfect.

When assessing how the alumni act as conduits to help students build their social networks, it seems to start with educating and training students on basic communication skills.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented my findings of how a career program intervention could intentionally support the postgraduation transition for racially minoritized students using the help of alumni of color as institutional agents. First, I explained the degree to which a career program intentionally aimed to support Black and Latinx students' postgraduation transition helped them access and build their social networks. What I learned was that before any concrete techniques and strategies for accessing social networks could be developed, their state-of-mind had to be acknowledged first. By helping them articulate thoughts and feelings about the transition, we were able to support that aspect of their impending transitions. To demonstrate how the project helped them access and build social networks to support their postgraduation transition, I listened assessed their attitudes towards the process, their willingness for self-reflection and critical thinking, their ability to recognize systems of support, and discovering the actual significance of the Collaborative in their planning process. Through it all, students seemed to want and need help, methods, steps, and reassurance as to how to connect to others. They needed the "know-how" of which the career coaches provided for them in addition to securing and growing their confidence to move forward as they deem fit for themselves.

I also explained the experiences of the alumni coaches of color and how they offered methods and steps to help the students' postgraduation transition as it pertained to helping them build social networks. The outcomes were varied. One coach actively shared her contacts as well

as showed the students how to communicate appropriately with those connections; another coach sought to educate them on valuing relationships, communicating well, and tips on navigating verbal and nonverbal communication; and the other chose to uplift and build confidence so that students will self-advocate and activate their own networks. Either way, students received messages of affirmation, and new ways to networking, whether from the coaches, other alumni or amongst themselves and their peers.

5.0 Discussion

The purpose of this inquiry was to examine how career services could support the college-to-career transition for racially minoritized students by utilizing institutional agents as social capital resources. For this study, I implemented and observed a career intervention. The location for this work took place at Allegheny College, a small liberal arts institution in northwest Pennsylvania. The Collaborative brought together six Allegheny students of color who were interested in learning more about how to access and build networks as they prepared for a purposeful postgraduate transition. The Collaborative also included three Allegheny alumni of color who served as career coaches for the students. The members of the Collaborative were purposefully selected and invited to participate. The student participants included four Black females, one Black male, and one Latina female. Alumni coaches included one Black male, one Black female, and one Latina female. Occupations of the alumni ranged from law, banking and finance, and non-profit. This project was coordinated to explore the degree to which alumni of color could improve access to and the building of social networks for Black and Latinx students. This career intervention was constructed to create an intentional social structure of relationships through which a successful transference of social capital resources could take place.

Coleman's (1988) expanded Social Capital Theory and Stanton-Salazar's (2011) Theory of Institutional Agency, which both claim that social support is embedded in an association, and accessible through direct or indirect ties with institutional agents, were the theoretical frameworks that guided this study. In the role as the association, the Career Education office at Allegheny College designed the project to create directly accessible ties to institutional agents (alumni of color) for racially minoritized students. In an effort to expose students to the process of identifying,

accessing and building their social networks to aid in their college-to-career transition, the exchange of social capital resources relied on social relationships and structures facilitated by the alumni of color career coaches. This facilitation established relations purposefully to provide social capital benefits to the students (Coleman, 1988; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). In this final chapter of this dissertation, I discuss three key findings, implication for practice, and implication for research.

5.1 Key Findings

The present study was designed to investigate by what means institutional agents could help Black and Latinx students build social networks to assist in their college-to-career transition. During this examination institutional agents were found to help students build social networks by helping them conceptualize and articulate their goals to empower them to build relationships and the methods to activate their own networks. The power to articulate created a sense of confidence in the students because it offered them the tools and techniques needed to go forward and develop their own relationships using the methods to activate a network. Out of the finding highlighted in the previous chapter, several essential discoveries sprang forth spanning different aspects defining what it means to access and build social networks. These three key findings are covered in this section. They include a look into what is required for career planning; the help needed in developing social capital for students of color; and, how institutional agents assist in students of color career development.

5.1.1 Key Finding #1: Career Planning Requires Self-Examination

The Collaborative demonstrated efforts to strategically expose students to social capital resources that would help them access and build a social network for their postgraduation aspirations. This strategic approach encouraged the student participants to look within themselves to establish goal definitions to prepare them for the postgraduation transition. In order for the students to gain access to vital resources through relationships with institutional agents, as suggested by Stanton-Salazar (2011), I discovered that the students had first to take stock of their resources, which involved an internal scan of their transitional situation (Krieshok, 2001; Schlossberg, Lynch & Chickering, 1989). They had to assess what support, supplies, and internal wherewithal they possessed for the task ahead.

Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering (1989) emphasized that students in transition must examine and assess the resources available to them to transition as smoothly as possible. In order to make this process to postgraduation success clearer, Krieshok (2001) acknowledged that students who utilize career services offerings were more likely to develop skills to articulate their career goals, remain open to options, and keep an open mind during the planning and search process. Understanding these two critical elements in the case of observing the students' introspection helped me recognize that they needed time to first ponder their thoughts and feelings about their postgraduation plans before strategizing plans of action regarding them. The Collaborative provided the students with the space to do that. Career coaching sessions with the alumni of color coupled with the after-session group interviews allowed students to explore new knowledge, examine what they already knew, and measure what they needed to move forward with achieving their outlined goals. Lent, Brown and Hackett's (2000) Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), a career development theory wherein they identified that "cognitive-people

variables (e.g. self-efficacy, outcomes expectations, and goals)" and external variables (e.g. the Collaborative) are able to influence their career development (p.36). The introspective work seemed to be a natural order in the process of evaluating resources and is necessary for the students to establish clear and defined goals for postgraduation. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) proposed in the SCCT that under optimal conditions, career interests give rise to congruent occupational choice goals. Altogether, this leads to goal action planning and achievement (Lent & Brown, 2013; Lent, Hung-Bin, Sheu, & Brown, 2010). For our purposes, the Collaborative presented itself as optimal conditions through which career interests could give rise for the students; however, instead of being occupied with the particularities of congruence of occupational choice, we were mostly concerned with ensuring that students were able to build action-oriented goals or plans of action as a life-long skill. Unlike SCCT, this study did not focus on the particular field the students chose to place his or her goals, because the approach needed to be generalizable so that no matter their postgraduation aspirations they would possess the skillset to continue to assess their resources and know how to cultivate them. Students in the Collaborative expressed their thoughts and fears about their postgraduation plans; however, they were able to gain the clarity, confidence, and plans to execute through this project.

Dey and Cruzvergara (2014) remind us that the purpose of career centers in the 21st-century is to help students build relationships that create connections and pool capital that provide valuable resources. Just as my inquiry attempted to expand resources for the students, it could not neglect the transitional properties of self-evaluation that must occur as part of any transition (Lent, Brown, Talleyrand, McPartland, Davis, Chopra & Chai, 2002; Schlossberg, Lynch & Chickering, 1989). The Collaborative offered students of color the means to connect to other students of color that were potentially experiencing similar thoughts and feelings about postgraduation plans. Equally

as important, the project offered the students a captive audience of alumni of color who helped them captivate those thoughts, normalize those feelings, and provide guidance on action steps to start building networks. In keeping with SCCT, Transition Theory, Social Capital Theory, and Institutional Agent theory, for the career examination process, it was important for students of color to evaluate the strengths and shortages of their current resources as much as it was important to have someone support them.

So too, racially minoritized students tend to have complex needs associated with career development than their White counterparts (Barrios-Allison, 2011; Frett, 2018; Harper 2008; Krieshok, 2001; Luzzo, 2000); hence, this finding illuminated itself during the analysis process. It was evident during the process that while the information (e.g. tips, techniques, knowledge) were universal, this information were received more openly and willingly coming from another person of color (Cuyjet, 2006; DuBois, Neville, Parra, & Pugh-Lilly, 2002; Enge, 2010) whether the information shared was from one of the alumni coaches or me. There were times when students would say that they knew some of the information shared with them but had not moved on it. Perhaps they did not initially trust the source or assumed that it was for White students and not applicable in their circumstances. Yet, throughout the time in the Collaborative, the students did not seem to attach the notion of the received information coming from a person of color or White making a difference in how they acted on it. While the inquiry was not designated to assess the psychosocial processes of the students to this degree, it became clearer that engaging in the critical thinking process to examine and evaluate their resources or networks was an important part of their career development. This key finding relates directly to Coleman (1988) in that social capital presents itself as an asset that contributes to human capital. This type of self-examination encourages and promotes an internal challenge to clarifying goals and planned actions to

89

accomplish them; and to that, Lent, Brown and Hackett's (2000) SCCT development to self-efficacy. Self-examination contributes to personal growth and development which informs human capital. The Collaborative enabled the career coaching sessions with the alumni and the after-session group talks to unlock ideas and examine ways to identify and connect to others to build network relationships. It held frank discussions identifying those persons, particularly the conversations proved fruitful coming from their alumni of color. There was a kinship in their non-Whiteness as well as their understanding of being an Allegheny student of color.

Powell-Pruitt (1997) declared that resources are difficult to mobilize for students of color and require a systematic change to make a difference in their lives. The Collaborative offered a systematic change for not only the students but to Career Education who had not conducted this type of directed intervention for students of color before. The relevance of the Collaborative's importance lies in the fact that Black and Latinx students found it challenging to ask for help (Davis, 2007; Feist, Saladin, & Hansmann, 2013; Gardner, 2014; Nichols, 2017; Powell, 1997; Saddler, 2010) and this career intervention allowed them space to talk collaboratively with alumni of color about issues and topics pertaining to identifying, planning, and executing goals.

5.1.2 Key Finding #2: Students of Color Need Help Developing Social Capital

The second key finding of this study illustrates the facilitation of social capital resources transference between the alumni and students as well as amongst the students themselves (Lin, 2001). In this study, I observed the degree of knowledge students recognized as it pertained to the various avenues available to ignite their social networks. In addressing ideas of social capital, researchers such as Putnam (2015) shares that Black and Latinx students did not have access to dominant forms of social capital resources; however, Yosso (2005) reminds us that they have

access to their own forms of capital. Aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant are six noted forms of valuable capital celebrated in Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth. The idea of community cultural wealth was to transform the lens through which Pierre Bourdieu's (Bourdieu & Passeron,1977) cultural capital theory argued that marginalized people were more likely to be disadvantaged because they did not possess the habitus knowledge of upper and middle class. Habitus, as defined by Bourdieu (1996), states that it is the "product of social conditioning associated with the corresponding condition, [which] make a systematic set of goods and properties… correspond to each class of positions" (p. 15). For Yosso's (2005), this perspective created a deficit mindset for students of color and discounted or failed to acknowledge the capital they possessed as they matriculated to campus.

Therefore, Yosso (2005) reinforced that community cultural wealth is considered as the cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities nurtured and embedded in the lived experiences of racially minoritized students. Through this lens, the method through which the Collaborative was modeled helps celebrate and capitalize on the shared communal assets of the alumni and students of color.

By focusing on the fact that the historically racially minoritized held less influential "strong-ties" and minimal "weak ties", Putnam (2015) and Parks-Yancy (2012) failed to focus on the cultural agility and resilience developed within those cultural communities in order to withstand the systematic and institutional oppressive social structures (Yosso, 2005). Parks-Yancy (2012) noted that because of lack of influential strong-ties (close relationships with people who possess high social capital) or weak ties, and to no fault of their own, Black and Latinx students possess little to no concept of the importance of these networks to help their career trajectories. However, the work of the Collaborative student participants fell on the spectrum of either having a postgraduation plan or not having a plan, and they lacked the necessary know-how to accomplish

91

their defined goals. With that, they were empowered to exercise their cultural wealth thereby strengthening their ties and capital.

For example, interactions within the career coaching sessions allowed the student and alumni participants to gather and have collaborative talks about postgraduation goals and other related topics associated with the transition. Coaches came to recognize that the students needed strategies and techniques to start building their social networks as they came to understand that they possessed the ability to do the work. Yet they noted that some students were more advanced in their skill development and needed refreshers on techniques, while others had a less experienced skillset and needed more information. These types of noticings created opportunities to extend aspirational capital through advice and storytelling that bore navigational strategies and goals to potential challenges

The Collaborative participants shared how these connections proved beneficial to them in the three-session career project. One of the Black female seniors recalled at the end of our time together in the Collaborative during the focus group that because of the project she knew whom to talk to in order to accomplish her postgraduation vision and further understood the importance of networking. Oddly, throughout the process, I waited to gather information about how the students perceived their color as a particular barrier or challenge to their postgraduation plans, particularly as it pertained to securing work; however, this was not the case. They found issues like relocating and how to pay bills or to work at a job they hated to be primarily their main concerns. This is shocking to me considering the unemployment outcome for Black and Latinx graduates. Because of this, I find the work in the Collaborative even more vital to connecting Black and Latinx students to those that can help them access and build their social networks. Coleman (1988) imagined that

social capital transference happens when the application of knowledge and resources are shared in social relationships between "actors"; actors, in this inquiry, were the students and alumni coaches.

A project such as this, the Collaborative serves as a career intervention that provided a safety net of sorts and extended in locos parentis, in a sense, for students who are not in-tuned with the inequitable practices of the labor market in which they may face upon graduation. In this career intervention, students strengthened their confidence to start building relationships with those who could champion their postgraduation success. Those champions would be either people in positions of influence, positions to connect them to persons of influence, or advice-givers, those who offer insight as to how to take next steps.

As we continue to do the work of providing equitable career support for Black and Latinx students as indicated by Powell-Pruitt (1997) by way of mobilizing resources for them, we create systemic change for racially minoritized students. As also signaled by Brown (2004), Guerrero (2015), and Krieshok (2001) career centers are challenged to provide comprehensive support throughout the career decision-making process. Through the work of the Collaborative with the students and alumni, this career initiative stood up to the challenge to provide comprehensive support for Black and Latinx students. In this key finding, as reflected in chapter four, students acquired confidence which informed their career decision-making process. For this inquiry, the process focused on decision-making that involved setting realistic goals and executable postgraduation plans. This key finding is consistent with Stanton-Salazar (2011) examination which stated that the position of the "institutional agent when, on behalf of the [student], act[s] to directly transmit, or negotiate the transmission of highly valued resources" (p. 1067). The biweekly sessions provided a space for the students, the alumni, and the researcher to collaboratively engage in conversations and activities to prepare for the career transition and building their networks.

The high-value resources in the Collaborative include having the concentrated attention of the alumnus to talk about and share their professional expertise, advice, and resources. The synergetic conversations and cross-learning opportunities presented throughout the project were the manifestations of what Coleman (1988) would identify as an exchange of social capital, he reasoned, "all social relations and social structures facilitate some form of social capital" (Coleman, 1988, p. 105) for this inquiry capital purports to be an extension associated with Lin's (2001) social network resources. Overall, I found that an intentionally designed career intervention can, in fact, help create access and build Black and Latinx student social networks to support their postgraduation transition.

5.1.3 Key Finding #3: Institutional Agents and Students' of Color Career Development

Cuyjet (2006) declared that racially minoritized students on majority White campuses need to see role models that reflect their culture group. The third key finding was that alumni of color were essential institutional agents for students of color as they embark on their career journey. We utilized the alumni of color career coaches as institutional agents who were positive role models as well. Stanton-Salazar (2011) defined that institutional agents are those who maintain high-status and relatively high positions within a multi-dimensional stratified institution. Although our alumni did not fit this specific aspect of the definition, they did align with the nuanced version that Stanton-Salazar (2011) forwarded in which institutional agents are seen as partners in designing interventions in school environments that authentically empower Black and Latinx students. Through this lens, alumni of color in this inquiry demonstrated their role as an institutional agency for the College and the students by participating in the Collaborative.

Stanton-Salazar (2011) stated, "there is little dispute that embedded resources are valid measures for social capital" (p. 36). By participating in the Collaborative, alumni served as embedded resources and played an important role in providing resourceful information, which contributed to the acquisition of some form of social capital for students. Allen (1992) forwarded that same race mentorship encouraged a positive psychological adjustment significant to cultural knowledge and commitment for students of color on majority White college campuses.

Phinney (n.d.) found that merely being a member of a group created a sense of belonging contributing to positive self-concept for students of color. Enabling this sense of belonging and positive self-concept was germane to the framework and curriculum of the Collaborative conducted by the alumni career coaches. Students found a sense of togetherness while participating in the project with the alumni career coaches as well as between themselves. To that fact, the students recommended that they would have preferred more time amongst themselves to talk and share between them.

Additionally, while working with the students, the alumni career coaches effectively established a level of trust through which they shared their authentic stories with the students. This authentic story sharing and transparency amongst the Collaborative participants encouraged a sense of community between the nine of them. Those stories came to serve as trust builders for the student participants. This finding further confirms that Coleman's (1988) ideas about capital, suggested that one of the primary tenets for the transference of social capital was the trustworthiness. The students reported that they appreciated how the alumni established trust with them in order to conduct the coaching sessions successfully.

Implementing the Collaborative was an attempt to meet the needs of racially minoritized students' postgraduate transition. Treating all students, the same, or in this case, serving students

through a race-neutral lens, can be problematic for racially minoritized students who have complex needs associated with career development (Berrios-Allison, 2011; Harper, 2008; Krieshok, 2001; Luzzo, 2000). Over the semester, the Collaborative strongly demonstrated the capacity to meet the nuanced needs of Black and Latinx students by allowing them concentrated time and space via small group formation with alumni of color to have conversations that could have made them initially resistant to ask anyone else otherwise. According to Harper (2008), same race guidance was an optimal experience due to their ability to lead students through the complexities of race issues and help provide advice to avoid professional pitfalls. Enge (2010) found that the most important factors of mentoring for students of color were, in fact, same-race mentoring relationships. The strategies and techniques in the Collaborative may have been somewhat universal for "all" students, the space in which to receive the information and through whom the information flowed seemed to make a difference to the students. Meaning, it seemed that Black and Latinx students participating in the Collaborative seemed to receive the information openly from their fellow alumni coaches of color.

5.2 Implications for Practice

This inquiry has practical implications for campus career services as they seek to design programs and services that intentionally support racially minoritized students' college-to-career transition. I challenge career centers to better understand the background and family history of students of color in order to fully recognize the needs of racially minoritized students. In this inquiry, the creation of the Collaborative was an effort to challenge the universal service model (Layer, 2003), which has been race-neutral and therefore centered on whiteness. This project was

an effort to acknowledge that the student body is not homogeneous (Williams, 2007), but is multiracial and multiethnic and should be approached intentionally as such. Frett (2018) recommended,

> [practitioners] should consider how to integrate culturally and socioeconomically practices, programs, policies, performance metrics, and communication into an integral part of all career services units, ensuring people of diverse backgrounds feel welcome to engage in and be serviced by the transformed offices of career services.

Findings from this inquiry provide insight to career practitioners in higher education, particularly as they seek to address the needs of Black and Latinx students' postgraduation transition with more intention and purpose.

The Collaborative provided a setting for students to conceptualize and articulate realistic goals to activate the network of people and relationships that will help champion for them and help execute their goals. The experiences the students gained from the project were consistent with the exchange and transfer of social network resources (Lin, 2001). Because people of color can be burdened down with labor market inequities such as tokenism, covert and overt discrimination, and glass ceilings that limit career advancements (Cole & Omari, 2003), it is imperative that we act on behalf of Black and Latinx students as their social advocates and work against the inherent system of workforce oppression. Building opportunities like the Collaborative where the process of accessing and building networks is accelerated and intentional should be considered moving forward.

More specifically for Allegheny, taken together, these findings reveal the need for Black and Latinx students to receive purposeful and directed attention to their college-to-career transition. There is, therefore, a definite need for Career Education to provide the Collaborative or

a program similarly modeled to connect Black and Latinx students to support a successful postgraduation transition. It could be suggested that connecting interested student participants to alumni of color, perhaps an organization such as the Association of Black Culture (ABC) alumni chapter or interested Board of Trustees of color to serve as career coaches would be a place to start inquiring about alumni coaching help for the students. While the time commitment for alumni coaches is not significant on demand, it requires them to be accessible, accountable, and authentic. The project's flexible modality (e.g. virtual coaching sessions), gave way for this type of career intervention to be a clear, directed, and organized way to give back to fellow students of color.

Based on some of the feedback from the students and the alumni coaches, my recommendation would be to shorten the coaching session times to one hour, leaving the second hour to the students to process thoughts and ideas amongst themselves. Further, to run a successful career project of this sort, the recommendation would be to continue to offer participation to sophomores, juniors, and seniors alike. Once they are allotted the time to commiserate thoughts and ah-ha moments between them, there will be much value gained from that peer interaction, as this notion was suggested to me by the student participants from this cycle.

To scale a project of this magnitude for the next cycle at Allegheny, consider creating three small groups with nine alumni of color (three for each group) in order to reach more Black and Latinx students. More systems of support should be made available to Black and Latinx student. As demonstrated in the data, the key findings in this inquiry suggest several courses of action for supporting the postgraduation transition for racially minoritized students and that is to be intentional. Career Education must engage in an intentional approach to anticipate and address college-to-career transition inequities. An implication of all of these findings is that both Black and Latinx students should be purposefully taken into account when designing and preparing

career programs, services that support students' postgraduation success. Black and Latinx students come to campus with an array of capital in the form of community cultural wealth. As career educators, we must honor and incorporate the cultural wealth they possess and teach them how to leverage it along with additional strategies needed to penetrate a system of historical oppression that is the labor market.

Indeed, practitioners considering how to leverage strategies and resources to aid in the career development process of Black and Latinx students must include alumni. I found it to be prudent to activate and motivate alumni of color to support these students. It is not to say that students cannot receive the same support from non-Black and Latinx alumni or other professionals, because there were undoubtedly demonstrated instances shared with the group from both the students and the alumni. However, the reality is such that a universal approach to career development and planning leaves out students of color and widens the success gap (Woodrow, Yorke, Lee, McGrane, Osborne, & Pudner, 2002). Yosso (2005) also encouraged those of us in education to challenge the dominant ideology. This means to contest stronghold and historical ideas of race neutrality and color-blindness. This type of approach not only masks the foundation of White power and privilege but also fails to recognize the value of being a person of color.

Same-race cultural capital exchange is important. It adds value, understanding, validation, and empowers students of color which bolsters their cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). During our time together in the Collaborative, I recognized that all of the students were clear that receiving this type of career and life advice from someone who looked like them was somehow easier and much more comfortable. Utilizing alumni of color in this capacity as institutional agents of color helped relieve some racial interference to building social network relationships. To note, while there is research supporting the importance of racially minoritized students benefiting from

mentors that look like them (Gardner, 2014; Cornileus, 2010; Valle, 2016; & Sengal, 2011), Parks-Yancy (2004) found that persons of color were more likely to have demonstratively benefited in social capital when connected to White men because White men held much more social capital than persons of color, male or female, as well as White women. This is to say that White alumni who are willing to be allies to support Black and Latinx students can serve as important mentors as well. This very idea was suggested by one of the alumni highlighting that it would be a fair consideration to incorporate White allies – if they were adequately trained in cultural competency.

Utilizing White allies is an area of consideration for practitioners as they move ahead to create purposeful college-to-career support for racially minoritized students, mainly if the institution yields a small number of alumni of color available to serve in those roles. However, Enge (2010) stressed that it is important to coordinate same-race mentor programs. Yosso (2005) also assured that this type of cultural connection spurs social capital that helps reassure students emotionally that they are not alone in the process of pursuing, completing, and moving on from higher education. I contend that not only career services provide same-race career interventions, but that they are provided in more innovative ways to create same-race mentorship delivery methods.

Further, I recommend that the Collaborative's design could help serve as a foundational model for not only students of color, but also for other disenfranchised students such as students with disabilities, military and veteran students, international students, First-Generation students, LGBTQ students, and those whose identities intersect with low socioeconomic resources. The Collaborative may or may not be generalizable to all institutions; however, I believe it can be scaled and crafted to best fit the needs of those historically marginalized students.

Higher education career services need to make students from historically marginalized backgrounds more aware of the support and advice that is available to them (Williams, 2007). Although Williams's (2007) work focused in the UK, the study was internationally cross-sectional to include the United States to conclude that the same common concerns occurred for UK and US racially minoritized students alike. Necessarily, campus career services can no longer provide color-neutral support for students. Sameness is not enough to prepare the students of color increasing on our campuses. It is time to make purposeful interventions that empower Black and Latinx students' postgraduation transition. Chan and Derry (2013) posited that campus-based career services offices must shift to provide more transformational college-to-career experiences for students.

The work in this inquiry holds to the type of transformational work career services should provide for racially minoritized students as they come to our campuses. It is our responsibility to make every effort to increase chances for success of postgraduation for students of color utilizing campus social capital resources. These resources are inherently embedded career offices based on the nature of their work and campus capital within their purview. Enge (2010) stated that higher education institutions have an inherent moral obligation to helping students of color develop personally and professionally so that they may take their rightful place in society as productive and contributing citizens. This project was a teaching tool that leveraged alumni of color relationships to bolster the postgraduation process by teaching Black and Latinx students the value of relationships at the same time giving them the tools to build them and how to cultivate them.

5.3 Implications for Research

The primary purpose for this inquiry was to understand if a career intervention designed for racially minoritized students could help access and build their social networks to support their postgraduation transition; and in doing so, utilize alumni of color as institutional agents to marshal the process. The data support critical elements of the theoretical foundations of this study that could be explored further in research. For example, there was evidence of Coleman's (1988) definition of the transference of social capital resources as well as Lin's (2001) definition of social capital resources and Stanton-Salazar's (2011) definition of institutional agency. Finally, Stanton-Salazar's (2011) work on institutional agency should be extended to the higher education realm as it pertains to supporting racially minoritized students as a natural extension of the theory. Yet the goal of this inquiry was to enhance practice, so these theoretical connections were not explored further. Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering (1989) noted that the evaluative process assumed during any transition is to evaluate and assess resources: situation, support, self, and strategy. The 4 Ss to which they are referred manifested throughout the data. For this inquiry, students took mental note of the transition before them (postgraduation), their support (those people and assets that could bolster), themselves (knowledge, skills, and abilities) and their strategies (mapping the support and internal wherewithal available to navigate the situation). While this inquiry did not focus on Schlossberg's (1989) transition model, it could not be ignored. It was apparent that students were working through each stage as they began to devise strategies to execute regarding their postgraduation transition.

The findings showed that students in the Collaborative expressed multiple ways in which they were able to either access and begin building or continued to build upon networks they started before engaging in the project, thus confirming that the alumni coaches performed accordingly as

institutional agents in the transmission of high-value resources. While copious amounts of research exist regarding the strong impact of mentoring and mentoring for students of color, the research does not reflect a project of this sort, and thus future research should further explore this type of initiative for purpose and effectiveness. Mentorship programs rely on the personality and interests matching system that connect one person with one student (Gardner, 2014; Senegal 2011). While this intervention allowed students and alumni to participate at multiple entry points and yet still received some gain from experience; this concept should be explored further in research, to understand the nuances of these types of group interactions.

5.4 Demonstration of Excellence

The outcomes of this inquiry will be shared with a number of interested constituents. Upon the embark of this work, I shared the foundation, literature, unemployment data, and the model with Board of Trustees of color at Allegheny. At that time, they requested that I return to present the findings with the entire Board of Trustees at their summer convene. Therefore, I will present the development of the model, how we incorporated alumni, and the impact of the project with the 41 membered committee of the College. Among those in attendance at the presentation will be board members, the Provost, the director of Career Education, members of Alumni Relations, and campus faculty and staff. This presentation will provide a greater understanding of the postgraduation needs of Black and Latinx students at Allegheny and what it can do in the future to provide intentional support in connecting them to their social capital resources early and often.

Additionally, I will submit a journal article to discuss my inquiry and findings to The Career Development Quarterly (CDQ). The CDQ is the official journal for the National Career

Development Association (NCDA) that provides career development for career professionals through published work on career counseling, career design and interventions, career coaching, career management, and career education. Those interested in the topics of Black and Latinx social capital resources, career development, and career interventions will be able to access the abstract and article through the printed and online journal itself and databases such as ERIC Current Index to Journals in Education, Higher Education abstracts, and PsycINFO. This is allowed my perspective to be added to the voices in the literature on related topics; hence, aiding to the enhancement of future works.

5.5 Conclusion

It would be unrealistic to claim that all racially minoritized students would benefit equally and gain access to social networks needed for their ideal career exploration with a small project such as the Career Collaborative; however, this career intervention was helpful in understanding to what degree accessing and building social networks could happen using alumni of color as institutional agents. Broadly, the Collaborative was successful in accomplishing its goals. The project aimed to see if the process of accessing a building social networks for racially minoritized students could be accelerated by designing a career intervention utilizing alumni of color as institutional agents. During this project, students demonstrated that they could indeed conceptualize, articulate, then ultimately put the tools they learned into action to prepare for their postgraduation transition.

For this inquiry, alumni were utilized as institutional agents because Allegheny held an actively engaged culture of working with alumni to help students' transition from college to the

workforce. It is part of the Allegheny tradition for current students to be encouraged to reach out to alumni; therefore, alumni anticipate helping students when they are equipped and available to help; however, this was the first attempt to center race in this process. Stanton-Salazar (2011) encourages the transmittal of high-valued resources to racially minoritized students. As evidenced in their feedback and responses, students of color received resources through personal interactions with institutional of agents who not only looked like them but whom they trusted.

While this was a first attempt at creating a positive space for career development for racially minoritized students, more efforts like this should be explored and implemented across all college campuses. Resonate and in alignment with my study, one of the alumni coaches implored to institutions stating,

> "giving [students] money [financial aid] and giving them entrance into the institution is not always going to guarantee that this student is going to be successful with using their educational opportunities, career opportunities, the development opportunities, or that they even know how to do any of these pieces… a student may not know how to access if you don't teach them how to access it."

The Career Collaborative Project provided students with the lessons of know-how to access and build social networks.

Appendix A Post Focus Group Protocol

Post Focus Group *Student Participants*	IQ1: *How does a career program aimed to help racially minoritized students access and build social networks support their postgraduation transition?*	IQ2: *How do institutional agents help racially minoritized students build social networks?*
Semi-structured interviews Consent forms distributed; permission to record requested 45 – 60 min; audio recorded Researcher conduct group interviews with 7 student participants Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to gather insights of participant experiences **Collect the data** Playback and transcribe interview conversations Create coding and framework to capture reoccurring and emerging themes categories that align with student learning outcomes capture those outliers not accounted for in the proposed evidence Sort data; code data ; record decision-making process for organizing the data	1. Describe any thoughts or feelings associated with preparing your postgraduation plans. 2. Tell me about your experience in the Collaborative. 3. In what ways has the Collaborative helped you learn how to develop and execute a postgraduation plan? 4. In what ways has the Collaborative made you aware of challenged you may face as a person of color on the job market? 5. What was the most significant part of the Collaborative and why? 6. How did the program fall short of your expectations? 7. Please share with me some of the fears or anxieties you may feel regarding barriers, challenges to achieving your postgraduation plans	8. Describe some of the reasons why you think connections to alumni of color are important? 9. In what ways has the Collaborative helped you build social networks? 10. When you think about your postgraduation plans, who comes to mind that can help you realistically meet your goal(s)? 11. What actions have you taken to plan you postgraduation goals with your career coaches? 12. Would you like to add anything?
Participant Demographics	Age, race, culture, graduation year, major/minor major, First Generation	

Appendix B Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol *Alumni participants*	IQ1: How does a career program aimed to help racially minoritized students access and build social networks support their postgraduation transition?	IQ2: How do institutional agents help racially minoritized students build social networks?
one-on-one, semi-structured interviews conducted with three alumni participants for 50-90 minutes via video conferencing or phone Consent forms distributed and collected electronically before the meeting; request permission to record requested	1. Tell me about yourself, including name, year graduated, and current position 2. Why did you get involved with the Collaborative? 3. In what ways do you believe that Allegheny supports the postgraduation transition for Black and Latinx students? 4. When you were an undergraduate at Allegheny, what type of career transitional support did you receive/utilize? 5. What type of career transitional support was missing from your experience at Allegheny?	6. What does it mean to be a mentor? 7. In what ways did the Collaborative help you develop or enhance your mentoring skills? 8. Reflecting on the Collaborative, how did you help build and activate the students' social networks? 9. In what way do you feel Black and Latinx student should initialize linkage to alumni networks?
Participant Demographics	Age, race, culture, graduation year, major/minor, phone number (with or without camera capabilities	

Appendix C Group Reflection Discussion Prompts

Session I – Tell Your Story
1. What were some of the most interesting discoveries you made while working toward this goal? About the challenge? About yourself? About others?
2. What did you learn were your greatest strengths? Your biggest areas for growth?
3. Describe any thoughts or feelings associated with preparing your postgraduation plans

Session II – Building Your Network
1. What was your impression of the Alumni Council Luncheon?
2. Share your thoughts or feelings about your experience at the luncheon
3. How do you feel about this coaching session as it pertains to moving you toward designated your goal, if at all?

Session III – Grow Your Network
1. What is the most important thing you learned personally?
2. How often did you need to revisit your goals?
3. Share with me some of the ways you have built social networks while in college and with whom? How do you imagine they will help you towards your goal(s)?
4. What were some of the most interesting discoveries you made while working toward this goal? About the challenge? About yourself? About others?

Appendix D Career Collaborative Project Invitation

I am excited to invite you to participate in a career coaching project between students and alumni of color in Fall 2018! The Career Collaborative Project will give Black and Latinx students an opportunity to build alumni networks, hear how alumni of color navigated their academic and career challenges, and learn about achieving success. Our 2018-19 initiative will take place both virtually, via video conferencing online, and in-person sessions during the fall 2018 semester. There will be three virtual coaching sessions and two professional development events.

The Career Collaborative Project is designed to bring together a small group of Black and Latinx students and alumni of color with intentional efforts to generate career conversations that address pressing issues associated with Black and Latinx students' post-college transition concerns. The goal is to enhance a traditional mentorship model and provide real-time discussions that will support and encourage your success.

Career Collaborative Project timeline (tentative):
October 2 – Kickoff and meet the alumni coaches (virtual)
October 10 – WestPACS Job and Internship Fair (Pittsburgh - transportation provided)
October 16 – Session I: Tell Your Story - alumni coaching session (virtual)
November 3 – Alumni Council Luncheon (Allegheny)
November 13 – Session II: Building Your Network ‑ alumni coaching session (virtual)
November 27 – Session III: Grow Your Network ‑ alumni coaching session (virtual)
December 4 – Closing event (virtual)

If you would like to be participate in this initiative, please fill out the following application.
If you have any questions about the Collaborative or the application, please contact Terri Carr at tcarr@allegheny.edu or call 814-332-3281.

Appendix E Career Collaborative Project Application

1. **Email address** *
2. **First Name** *
3. **Last Name** *
4. **Phone Number** *
5. **Google Hangout Username**
6. **Alternate email address**
7. **Major(s) (or include undecided)** *
8. **Minor(s)** *
9. **Select Your Class Year** *

Mark only one oval.

First-Year

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

10. **Ethnicity/Race** *

Native American

African American/Black

Latinx/Hispanic

Multi-ethnic/multi-racial

Caucasian/White

Asian/Pacific Islander

Other:

11. **Which career coaching topics interest you most? List all that apply**

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Insight on how to best utilize Allegheny resources (faculty, staff, peers, and alumni)
- ☐ Transitioning to life after Allegheny (job search skills and knowledge)
- ☐ Leveraging a Liberal Arts education
- ☐ Understanding your worth
- ☐ Balancing family expectations and personal realities
- ☐ Networking- how to build and grow connections
- ☐ Considering and applying for graduate school
- ☐ Personal experiences and lessons learned
- ☐ Job or internship search process
- ☐ Application materials critique (resume, personal statement, cover letter)
- ☐ Facing financial challenges
- ☐ Other:

Tell me about yourself: why is it important for you to participate in this project? *

Appendix F Student Application Evaluation

Student Name_____   Student Class Year _____

Evaluator Name _____

Identified Ethnicity

☐   Native American
☐   African American/Black
☐   Latinx/Hispanic
☐   Multi-ethnic/multi-racial
☐   Caucasian/White
☐   Asian/Pacific Islander
☐   Other: _____

Short Essay Rubric

Criteria to be Assessed	Rank each aspect of the short essay on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 as the best. In the space below each numeric value you assign, explain your reasoning.				
Organization and focus: *clear idea with supporting details, addresses the topic*	1	2	3	4	5
Originality: *details, word choice*	1	2	3	4	5
Writer's voice: Consistent throughout, engaging, conveys sincerity	1	2	3	4	5
Overall success: *addresses prompt clearly and developed thought completely*	1	2	3	4	5

Based on the application, I

_____ Highly recommend this student

_____ Recommend this student

_____ Recommend this student with reservations

Explanation:

_____

_____

___ Do not recommend this student

Explanation:

_____

_____

Appendix G Student Invitation to Participate

Hi There!

I am Terri Carr, Associate Director of Career Education and doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Management program at the University of Pittsburgh (UPitt). I have been fortunate enough to expand my research to support students of color at Allegheny. I am currently working on a project in which I invite you offer your thoughts and input.

I am excited to invite you to participate in a career coaching project between students and alumni of color in Fall 2018! The Career Collaborative Project will give racially minoritized students an opportunity to build alumni networks, hear how alumni of color navigated their academic and career challenges, unexpected challenges and barriers, and achieved success. Our 2018-19 initiative will take place both virtually, via video conferencing online, and in-person sessions within the fall semester. There will be three virtual coaching sessions and two professional development events.

The Career Collaborative Project is designed to bring together a small group of Black and Latinx students and alumni of color with intentional efforts to generate career conversations that address pressing issues associated with Black and Latinx students' post-college transition concerns. The goal is to enhance a traditional mentorship model and provide real-time, discussions that will support and encourage your success.

Career Collaborative Project timeline (tentative):

October 10 – Kickoff and meet the alumni coaches (virtually)
October 10 – WestPACS Job and Internship Fair (Pittsburgh)
October 16 – Session I: Tell Your Story - alumni coaching session (virtual)
November 3 – Alumni Council Luncheon (Allegheny)
November 13 – Session II: Building Your Network – alumni coaching session (virtual)
November 27 – Session III: Grow Your Network – alumni coaching session (virtual)
December 4 – Closing event (TBD - hybrid meeting and thank you)

Participation in this study includes the following:
1. Participant information group discussion after each session

2. At least one focus group or interview, lasting between 60-90 minutes, to be held at Allegheny College. You will also receive a $20 Visa gift card at the end of the focus group/interview.

3. A small panel discussion about your experience during the closing event. At that time, you will receive leather professional padfolio for participating in the Career Collaborative Project.

This investigation includes the following eligibility criterion: **you must be currently enrolled as a student at Allegheny College and identify as Black or Latinx**. The information you share will be kept confidential and your name and/or other personal identifying information will not be associated with your responses. Also, your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

My research team will be conducting focus groups/interviews with students the week of **December 3 – 7, 2018**.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please reply to this email (email@pitt.edu). If you have questions, you may contact me at email@pitt.edu or via phone at (502) 555-555.

Thank you for your time!

Terri Carr
Doctor of Education Candidate
Higher Education Management
University of Pittsburgh
Principal Investigator, Career Collaborative Project

Appendix H Alumni Career Coach Email Invitation

Dear [NAME],

Greetings from Meadville and Allegheny! I hope that this message finds you well!

I'm writing with a request that I hope you'll consider, especially because I've observed your enthusiastic support for current students as they ponder their life paths beyond Allegheny College and the readiness you've demonstrated to return to campus to participate in events such as the Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development Day. I am hoping you will consider serving as a career coach in our fall semester career coaching program.

My colleague and friend Terri Carr, copied on this message (you met her at the Professional Development Day), has developed a semester-long career coaching program as part of her doctoral research study named the Career Collaborative Project (CCP). The CCP is a career coaching initiative that is designed to support the college-to-career transition for Allegheny College students of color. If you are so inclined to act as a career coach, Terri will reach out to all of the coaches do go over informed consent for participation in the research, training for the program, and review the expectations and logistics.

I've attached a document that provides more information about this ground-breaking project for you to review at your leisure.

[NAME], if you would like to participate as a coach, please let me know by [DETERMINED DATE]? Terri will follow up soon after to connect with you. Thank you!

I look forward to hearing from and working with you!

Best wishes for your continuing success,
Jim

Appendix I Smart Goals Activity Sheet

SMART GOALS	
GOAL CHARACTERISTIC	**What does it mean?**
S – specific	Goals should be stated in specific rather than vague terms e.g. "I would like to train at the Foreign Service Institute to ultimately work as a foreign service ambassador" rather than "I want to do something in international policy work"
M – measurable	Whenever possible, goals should be measurable, or quantifiable e.g. "in the 12 months, I want to conduct an informational interview with three retired foreign service ambassadors"
A – attainable	Goals should be challenging, but above all they should be realistic e.g. "research and speak to three alumni who can help me"
R – results-oriented	Goals should support your vision for your life, able to review and update e.g. by comparing current results to target you can update goals
T – target date	Goals should specify he target dates when they are to be attained e.g. "By April 15" instead of "Early this year"

Identify one goal you would like to achieve five years from now in each area (if you can)	
CATEGORY	**LIFE GOAL**
Education	
Career/Job	
Travel	
Live Where?	
Other Ideas	

THREE PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP ACCELARATE, ADVANCE, OR CHAMPION MY GOAL:		
NAME	**CONTACT INFO**	**NOTES FROM CONVERSATION**
(1)		
(2)		
(3)		

5-YEAR
GOAL:_____

SMART GOALS	
GOAL CHARACTERISTIC	What does it mean?
S – specific	Goals should be stated in specific rather than vague terms e.g. "I would like to train at the Foreign Service Institute to ultimately work as a foreign service ambassador" rather than "I want to do something in international policy work"
M – measurable	Whenever possible, goals should be measurable, or quantifiable e.g. "in the 12 months, I want to conduct an informational interview with three retired foreign service ambassadors"
A – attainable	Goals should be challenging, but above all they should be realistic e.g. "research and speak to three alumni who can help me"
R – results-oriented	Goals should support your vision for your life, able to review and update e.g. by comparing current results to target you can update goals
T – target date	Goals should specify he target dates when they are to be attained e.g. "By April 15" instead of "Early this year"

WHAT GOAL CAN YOU ACHIEVE IN ONE YEAR TOWARDS YOUR 5-YEAR GOAL:

THREE PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP ACCELARATE, ADVANCE, OR CHAMPION MY GOAL:		
NAME	CONTACT INFO	NOTES FROM CONVERSATION
(1)		
(2)		
(3)		

5-YEAR
GOAL:_____

SMART GOALS	
GOAL CHARACTERISTIC	What does it mean?
S – specific	Goals should be stated in specific rather than vague terms e.g. "I would like to train at the Foreign Service Institute to ultimately work as a foreign service ambassador" rather than "I want to do something in international policy work"
M – measurable	Whenever possible, goals should be measurable, or quantifiable e.g. "in the 12 months, I want to conduct an informational interview with three retired foreign service ambassadors"
A – attainable	Goals should be challenging, but above all they should be realistic e.g. "research and speak to three alumni who can help me"
R – results-oriented	Goals should support your vision for your life, able to review and update e.g. by comparing current results to target you can update goals
T – target date	Goals should specify he target dates when they are to be attained e.g. "By April 15" instead of "Early this year"

WHAT GOAL CAN YOU ACHIEVE 90-DAYS TOWARDS YOUR 1-YEAR GOAL:

THREE PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP ACCELARATE, ADVANCE, OR CHAMPION MY GOAL:		
NAME	CONTACT INFO	NOTES FROM CONVERSATION
(1)		
(2)		
(3)		

Appendix J 5-Year Goal Action Plan Curriculum

Session I: Tell Your Story
Career Competencies: Career management and Professionalism

Overall Collaborative Objective: Access, build and expand students' social networks by developing and executing a 5-Year Goal Action Plan

Student Learning Outcome(s)
- Identify and articulate skills, knowledge, and experiences relevant to desired goals
- Use institutional resources to help support identified goals
- Prepare goal-driven action plan
- Define and discuss postcollege transition concerns with career coaches

KEY LESSON

Welcome:

5:00 – 5:15 PM

"Hello! It is exciting to see you all. It is especially exciting to see you take initiative in thinking about life after Allegheny. All of the alumni coaches are here to share some insight and tools to get you started on your path to setting goals and connecting to people who can support you in your efforts. Let's go around and reintroduce ourselves."

INTRODUCE yourself and share your background, class year, Allegheny major/minor, clubs/organizations, what you do currently in your profession, and why serving as a career coach is important to you.

ASK students to introduce themselves, major/minor, hometown, class year, clubs/organization, current career interests (it's okay if they do not know yet), and why participating in the Collaborative is important to them.

REVIEW session objective

Session Objective:

5:15 – 6:00 PM

"During this session we will work on goal setting. We will work on having you identify one goal you would like to achieve five years from now. So, no matter if you are a sophomore or senior, this goal will have you looking at life after Allegheny. In doing this activity, and in the sessions after, you will work toward identifying and taking action steps towards accomplishing that goal. Specifically, for our purposes here today, we will start with having you think about what that goal looks like."

ASK them to take out 5-Year Goal Action Plan sheet they should have picked up from the table when they walked into the room. They will use this to write down their initial goal during this session and subsequent goals in the other sessions. **Prompt** you could ask them: How do you envision your future? What do you need to be doing to be most fulfilled, happy, and driven version of you?

EXPLAIN why setting realistic goals are important, and that they should strive to set a S.M.A.R.T. goal. A goal that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-oriented, and Time-based. A S.M.A.R.T. goal should be focused, realistic and tied to your career interests (in this case).

STRESS: "During our time together, we will take time to discuss your chosen goal, what steps you think it will take reach it, and the support you have or will need."

Skills Employers Seek
- Creative Thinking
- Critical Thinking
- Adaptability
- Problem-solving

CAREER COACH(ES) TIP: DISCUSSION POINTS

Students want to know:

- How to transition to life after Allegheny
- How to build and grow networks
- How to leverage a Liberal Arts education
- How to implement job/internship searches

Session Materials
- Paper (2)
- Pen/pencil
- Resume

Session II: Build Your Network
Career Competencies: Career management and Professionalism

Overall Collaborative Objective: Access, build and expand students' social networks by developing and executing a 5-Year Goal Action Plan

Student Learning Outcome(s)
- Identify and articulate skills, knowledge, and experiences relevant to desired goals
- Use institutional resources to help support identified goals
- Prepare goal-driven action plan
- Define and discuss postcollege transition concerns with career coaches

Welcome: 5:00 – 5:15 PM	"Hello! It is exciting to see you all again. It is especially exciting to see you take initiative in thinking about life after Allegheny. All of the alumni coaches are here to share some insight and tools to get you started on your path to setting goals and connecting to people who can support you in your efforts. Let's go around and reintroduce ourselves."

INTRODUCE yourself and share your background, class year, Allegheny major/minor, clubs/organizations, what you do currently in your profession, and why serving as a career coach is important to you.

ASK students to introduce themselves, major/minor, hometown, class year, clubs/organization, current career interests, and anything they would like to share from their conversation from the last session.

REVIEW session objective

Session Objective:

5:15 – 6:00 PM

"During this session we will pick up where you all left off on goal setting in the first session. We will quickly work on having you identify one goal you would like to achieve one year from now that start to gear the conversation more toward concerns, challenges, or barriers you may see as preventing you from achieving your overall goal. In this sessions you will work toward identifying those obstacles and identifying ways to overcome them. Taking these action steps will work towards accomplishing that goal making it more attainable. Let's start with taking a few minutes to identify your one-year goal toward your overall goal, then we will work on identifying and addressing obstacles."

ASK them to take out 5-Year Goal Action Plan handout. They will use this to revisit their initial goal and then work toward setting the one-year goal this session and subsequent goals in the other sessions. **NEXT** have the students grab the "Overcoming Obstacles" handout located on the table by the door. Direct them to write down three challenges/obstacles they feel they might face in achieving their overall 5-year goal. Give them some time to think about it, then have them write them down on the sheet.

Session III: Grow Your Network
Career Competencies: Career management and Professionalism

Overall Collaborative Objective: Access, build and expand students' social networks by developing and executing a 5-Year Goal Action Plan

Student Learning Outcome(s)
- Identify and articulate skills, knowledge, and experiences relevant to desired goals
- Identify areas for professional growth
- Connect with professionals in related fields of interest, locations, or companies
- Use institutional resources to help support identified goals
- Prepare goal-driven action plan
- Develop a list of contacts who can provide information and support for career goal and suggest job search strategies

Welcome:

5:00 – 5:15 PM

"Hello! It is exciting to see you all again. It is especially exciting to see you take initiative in thinking about life after Allegheny. All of the alumni coaches are here to share some insight and tools to get you started on your path to setting goals and connecting to people who can support you in your efforts. Let's go around and reintroduce ourselves."

INTRODUCE yourself and share your background, class year, Allegheny major/minor, clubs/organizations, what you do currently in your profession, and why serving as a career coach is important to you.

ASK students to introduce themselves, major/minor, hometown, class year, clubs/organization, current career interests, and anything they would like to share from their conversation from the last session.

REVIEW session objective

Session Objective:

5:15 – 6:00 PM

"During this session we will start out with having you set your 90-day goal. This goal will be the short term goal that will help you toward your 1-year goal, in which both should support your selected 5-year goal. We will also circle back to the list of contacts you have collected thus far. We will talk about online social networking and professional databases like LinkedIn and Gator Connect to help you expand and grow your network. We want to firm-up your action plan at this stage. Remember action steps especially as it pertains to connecting with professionals, whether alumni or professionals from your field of interest will work towards accomplishing that goal making it more attainable."

ASK them to take out 5-Year Goal Action Plan handout. Write down a goal they can pursue within the next 90 days that will help them work toward achieving their 1-year goal. **NEXT** have them review and share their 5-year, 1-year, and 90-day goals.

EXPLAIN why networking both face-to-face and online is important and how it can help advance your goals.

Skills Employers Seek
- Collaboration
- Critical Thinking
- Adaptability
- Problem-solving

CAREER COACH(ES) TIP: DISCUSSION POINTS

Students want to know:

- How to transition to life after Allegheny
- How to build and grow networks
- How to leverage a Liberal Arts education
- How to implement job/internship searches

Session Materials
- Paper (2)
- Pen/pencil
- Laptop
- LinkedIn Profile
- Gator Connect

Appendix K Overcoming Obstacles Worksheet

OBSTACLE/BARRIER/CHALLENGE	SOLUTION

Overcoming Obstacles Worksheet

Appendix L Data Analysis Matrix

	IQ1: How does a career program aimed to help racially minoritized students access and build social networks to support their post-graduation transition?						
Post Focus Group	Q1: Describe any thoughts or feelings associated with preparing your postgraduation plans	Q2: What, if any, barriers or challenges come to mind that you think you might face in achieving your postgraduation goals? *Analysis about the question: They aren't seeing things like their race as barriers & challenges. The challenges arise as more "how to" make adult decision*	Q3: Describe how, if you do, connect to family, friends, and/or campus mentors to communicate your postgraduation plans?	Q4: What are your thoughts, feelings, or experience with reaching out to people you do not know to talk about your postgraduation plans?	Q5: Tell me about your experience in the Collaborative as it pertains to preparing and executing your plans?	Q6: In what ways has the program met or not met your expectation?	Q7: Thrown out
Dee	I didn't feel like I actually like know how to really go into it. And then, but now, I am kind of like, after this program, I can start looking at jobs that I'm probably going to go post-graduation. Like you know, just go reach out to a cousin of mine... he told me about websites where you can search for jobs for startup companies" 'I just didn't know how I was going to get there what methods, and what steps I was going to take to get there. My goal and definitely my plan, search for the job	I worry about not finding the ideal job.		I'm currently doing that now, I have no problem with that	I had goals, but it gave[me] more ==confidence to know the exact plan that I wanted.== This program has taught me to use your resources that are here for you as well [to] better prepare you.		

125

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