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“We Make a Life by What We Give”: The Impact of a High School Mentoring Program on the Perceptions and Academic Achievement of Black Males

Brandon R. Ross

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“WE MAKE A LIFE BY WHAT WE GIVE”: THE IMPACT OF A HIGH SCHOOL
MENTORING PROGRAM ON THE PERCEPTIONS AND ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT OF BLACK MALES

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Dedication

God is great! All glory and honor belong to him. At times, this dissertation felt insurmountable. I am grateful for God's grace, mercy, and sustainability through it all. This work is dedicated to my mother Dr. LaVon Michelle Ross-Purdie. At an early age she showed me the value of hard work and commitment. I watched her work relentlessly as a single mother to provide for her four sons. She did it with an unwavering faith and an inexpressible strength. My mother taught me that quitting was easy and that the true test of strength is not what you go through but how you go through it. She showed me how to endure life through tough times and had I not learned those lessons, I would not have been able to see this dissertation through to completion. Mom, thank you for being a model that I can always strive to emulate.

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Abstract

This action research study describes how a high school mentoring program impacts the academic achievement and postsecondary planning of Black male students. It further explores the perception Black male students have on school and their White teachers. The theoretical frameworks that support this research are social bonding theory (SBT) and critical race theory (CRT). This study used a qualitative design through a survey to examine the following research questions: “How does a high school mentoring program impact the academic achievement and perception of school for Black male students?” The study further examined “How a high school mentoring program impacts the postsecondary planning for Black male participants?” Lastly, the study explored, “What perceptions do Black male students have of their White teachers?” There were eight mentees selected from a mentoring program of 40 students. Four alumni of the mentoring program were matched with the current participant sample. Collectively the 12 students were selected through a simple random sample. Data collection included surveys from participants, their parents, teachers, other faculty and staff, and community partners affiliated with the mentoring program and the participants. Results of this study identified several themes that showcase the positive impact of a high school mentoring program on Black male students. The results of this study also suggested that mentoring is a necessary intervention that aids Black male students in their pursuit of academic and postsecondary success. Furthermore, it highlighted that Black male students in a high

school mentoring programs project high academic standards and an intent academic focus. The study emphasized how students in mentoring programs possess a positive perception of school. Black male students in high school mentoring programs saw their White teachers, overall, as understanding and supportive. They also reported constructive relationships with their White male teachers and ruptured relationships with their White female teachers.

Keywords: mentoring, Black male students, high school, culturally relevant, cultural competence, perception, social bonding theory, critical race theory

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Successive lines of research continue to examine the experiences of Black male students across important systems. In recent years, scholars have conceptualized culturally relevant and responsive practices in mentoring programs for Black male students (Gordon et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2014). The lack of achievement among Black students in comparison to their White counterparts is not a new debate. According to Ford and Moore (2013), Black students have, for some time, been at the center of the debate on two major issues which focus on (a) low academic achievement and (b) a lack of placement in gifted classes. The first issue has garnered more attention than the latter and scholars have produced vast amounts of literature on low academic achievement and the subsequent achievement gap (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Lee & Burkham, 2002; Peske & Haycock, 2006). Although the second issue does not appear to have the extensive literature coverage as the first, it does appear to have an adequate level of scholastic coverage. What does appear to be less than adequate, however, has been extensive literature discussing the impact of mentoring on one or both of the aforementioned issues, especially when focusing specifically on Black male students. This is not to say that there was no scholarship in this regard, because scholars such as Awad (2007), Datnow and Cooper (1998), and Osborne (1999) have espoused tenets of Black students' academic success and hinted at the importance of mentoring or quasimentoring as a significant factor. More recently, scholars such as Davis and Allen

(2020) and Quigley and Mitchell (2018) have opined that education is a collaborative endeavor between communities and schools and that student groups help support the mission of schools.

Gordon et al. (2009) found boys who participate in mentoring programs had higher GPAs and higher standardized test scores than those who did not. Additionally, Black male students who participated in mentoring programs identify with academics more than those who did not (Davis & Allen, 2020). Great mentors consistently and skillfully offer generous listening, affirmation, challenge, feedback and insider information, networking, visibility, intentional role-modeling, professional socialization, advocacy, and increasing mutuality and collegiality to mentees (Johnson et al., 2020). Additionally, many Black male students seek comfort and academic support within their micro-communities like mentoring groups (Brooms, 2019; S. R. Harper, 2009). Black male students, when presented with situations of racism and isolation, develop meaningful and supportive relationships within their own subculture (Brooms & Davis, 2017).

Large data on successful academic solutions involving the mentoring aspect of schooling for Black male students is still significantly lacking in coverage. The researcher illustrates this point further with a short anecdote discussing the lack of achievement, mentoring, and the impact of mentoring on Black male students the researcher has encountered. The researcher remembers rather vividly, his first few meetings with students as a high school counselor. There was one interaction that stood out the most, which was the researchers initial meeting with a student named Ben (pseudonym).

Ben, a Black male, was the first student the researcher encountered upon assuming their new position as a school counselor. He had recently completed his junior year, and he came in to see his former counselor, Ms. Apple, who was training the researcher to take her place. Ben, in their first encounter, shared with the researcher that he was the starting running back on the football team and had aspirations to play football in college. While working through schedule changes later in the summer, the researcher came across Ben's transcript and it was evident that he struggled in his coursework. Ben's transcript displayed a history of low and failing grades, which contributed to his low grade point average. In the days that followed the researcher's observation, Ben came by the researcher's office to discuss his schedule. The researcher used this opportunity as a time to learn more about his short- and long-term goals. During the conversation, Ben shared he wanted to go to a 4-year college or university but that he did not feel adequately prepared due to his lack of academic preparation to get accepted. Ben also shared that he aspired to play football collegiately. During that conversation, the researcher asked Ben about what he felt could help get him over the hump. He responded by saying, "I just need someone to keep a lookout for me and make sure I stay on track." Ben further shared that he felt there were not enough Black teachers in the school that could identify with him. As the year went on, Ben and the researcher became extremely close as the researcher began to serve as a mentor to him. Over time, they developed what he called a "father-son relationship or something like a cool uncle" type relationship. That was significant as it illustrated that he knew the researcher cared about him and his success.

By the end of the school year, Ben's grades were phenomenal. He made As and a B during his senior year. After his stellar academic performance during his senior year, he received several scholarships for Call Me MISTER (2019) and other minority teaching programs. Ben went on to attend a 4-year postsecondary institution in South Carolina, pursuing his bachelor's degree in elementary education. He graduated in December of 2020. As a result of their mentor-mentee relationship, they have stayed in contact since his senior year, and he often finds time to call the researcher to invite him to lunch and to update him on his life and his goals, as well as to seek counsel.

Serving as Ben's mentor gave Ben the extra support he needed to really connect with school and helped steer him in the direction of his postsecondary goals. Ben had a really negative perception of school before the connection with his mentor materialized. He shared with the researcher many times that if it was not for him, he would have dropped out. Every student carries with them certain experiences and dynamics that shape their perception of school. The impact of a student's perception of school could impact their academic achievement. The purpose of this study was to investigate how a high school mentoring program has impacted the perception of school and academic achievement for Black male participants.

The grim experiences of Black male students may lead to negative teacher perceptions that are rooted in stereotypes, especially for educators who lack cultural competence (Ross & Stevenson, 2018; Steele, 1992). One of the aims for this study was to explore the intersection of Black male students' perceptions of school and their White teachers with their overall academic achievement. This was a vital element to this study as most teachers in schools throughout the United States are White, middle-class women

with limited experience in interacting with students from different social-cultural backgrounds (Chambers & Lavery, 2017).

The researcher is passionate about this work because there is an urgency to produce interventions to support the needs of Black males. Had it not been for the impact of the researcher's mentor the outcome of his personal and professional life could have been traumatic. Additionally, because of those experiences the mentor and researcher of this study was better able to support Ben, his mentee. For Black male students having this supportive presence is necessary to help them achieve greater outcomes in school and in life.

Problem of Practice

In the researcher's 10 years working with students, the researcher has worked in three high schools and within the community through adult education programs. In each of those schools, and within those entities, Black male students have consistently performed more poorly academically than any other racial subgroup. It is rather disappointing when reviewing school data with faculty, especially when every piece of data reflects Black male students as the lowest performing subgroup as it relates to grade distribution, college entrance exam scores, state assessments, attendance, and discipline. In reflecting on some discomfiting elements within public education, it becomes increasingly frustrating with the gaps that exist between Whites and students of color (e.g., Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Latinos, Indians). These variables largely impact how Black male students and other minorities perceive schooling.

An evaluation of a school district in South Carolina revealed that African American male students trailed White females, White males, and African American

females in their performance on the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS). This assessment is administered to South Carolina students in grades 3-8 in the areas of Writing, English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science. (South Carolina Department of Education, 2014).

Gordon et al. (2009) focused on building interventions that understand the factors that prevent Black students from excelling in the academic environment. The problem of practice this study aimed to address was that Black male students in high school are experiencing a lack of support through interventions (e.g., mentoring programs) that promote their academic achievement and postsecondary planning. Furthermore, due to this lack of support, Black male students have a negative perception of school, which is largely impacted by their perceptions of their White teachers due to racial microaggressions (Von Robertson & Chaney, 2017). Additionally, Black male students are suspended and expelled disproportionately as compared to their peers (Howard, 2013). They are also attending school at lower rates than their peers (P. C. Harris et al., 2014). Many schools need to expand access to interventions and opportunities to help close these gaps (K. Harper, 2022). Many of these issues relate to how Black male students perceive school. This study used the intervention of mentoring in hopes of addressing the issue of Black male perception of school, their White teachers, and how that intersected with academic achievement for Black male students that are enrolled in a high school mentoring program.

Mentoring is impactful and helps students find success. Improving Black male students' success necessitates a school milieu where they experience inviting and supportive learning environments. Accordingly, school leaders must be intentional about

cultivating learning environments that are centered around students' lived experiences and promote a sense of belonging and self-confidence (Brooms, 2019; Lopez, 2011). Mentoring is a tool that can bond students of color to the learning process and may give them extra support, which Black male students especially need to be successful in all levels of schooling (National Mentorship Partnership, n.d.; K. Harper, 2022). Early 2000s researchers, such as Freeman (1999) and Gordon et al. (2009) have studied the effects of mentoring on students in postsecondary school. Recent scholars such as Davis and Allen (2020) and Quigley and Mitchell (2018) have specifically studied the impacts of mentoring for students in secondary school.

Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How does a high school mentoring program impact the academic achievement and perception of school for Black male students?
2. How does a high school mentoring program impact the postsecondary planning for Black male participants?
3. What perceptions do Black male students have of their White teachers?

Theoretical Framework

Grant and Osanloo (2014) liken a theoretical framework to the blueprint of a house. The researcher was directed with the designing and construction of the research, similarly to that of an architect when designing a house. In this action research study, there were two theories that served to aid in the overall design of the study. The two theories were social bonding theory (SBT) and critical race theory (CRT).

SBT plays a key role in education as it outlines mechanisms that further bind students to their learning. Paxton et al. (2006) defined SBT as:

Empowerment and its components consist of a constellation of elements that are essential to positive and socially appropriate development during adolescence (Chinman and Linney, 1998). For example, elements of empowerment, such as bonding to positive adults and bonding to the community, are thought to provide youth with positive traits, positive labels, and in general, a positive identity (Erickson, 1968; Bem, 1978; Rosenberg, 1998). (p. 293)

SBT in education can be summarized as follows: if you give a child something of internal value to hold on to, then they will do whatever possible to maintain it (Peguero et al., 2016). For example, if a devoted athlete is unmotivated in the classroom and a parent, coach, administrator, or school official pulls the athlete from their sport due to poor academic performance then it is likely that the athlete will try to regain the opportunity to play the sport by being more motivated in class.

Paxton et al. (2006) discussed how social bonding has positive effects on developing students. Paxton et al.'s research suggested students who experience this level of bonding are more satisfied with their lives as well. SBT was critical in this research because mentoring was the intervention used to bond students to the academic process.

Brooms (2018) discussed Black Male Initiative programs, which are a programs for Black male students in college. These programs are designed to promote academic success and create a brotherhood among Black college male students. The article went on to suggest that Black Male Initiative programs establish student engagement for the students that actively take part (Brooms, 2018). These programs are important because

Black male students face challenges as it relates to race and racism as they are often stereotyped (Brooms, 2018). Brooms (2018) went on to discuss how Black male students are often disengaged due to low educational expectations.

The secondary theory that served as part of the theoretical framework for this research was CRT. CRT suggests that racism and White supremacy are sustained over a prolonged period. CRT looks to find ways to make laws conform to equality (Quigley & Mitchell, 2018). CRT was important in this study as it addresses the argument on the achievement disparity between Black students and their White peers (Walton, 2019). CRT scholars such as Steele (1992) have offered that race plays a significant role in the learning experiences of students of color in ways that educators may not have even considered.

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) explored CRT and weighed whether race or class was the leading cause of the marginalization of minorities. They asked the question, “is racism a means by which whites secure material advantages or is a ‘culture of poverty,’ including broken families, crime, intermittent employment, and a high educational dropout rate, what causes minorities to lag behind?” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 120). This question is painful but necessary when addressing the academic achievement gap between minority and majority groups. The culture of poverty, which Delgado and Stefancic (2017) discussed, also impacts how students from marginalized communities perceive school.

Milner (2013) asserted, “CRT is an analytic tool that should be used to unpack, shed light on, problematize, disrupt, and analyze how systems of oppression, marginalization, racism, inequity, hegemony, and discrimination are pervasively present

and ingrained in the fabric of policies, practices, institutions, and systems in education that have important bearings on all students” (p. 1). Critical race theorists such as Gloria Ladson-Billings, Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Alan Freeman, and others have contended that there are systemic conditions within schools and communities that effect the outcomes and opportunities for success for students of color. It is critically important for schools and teachers to address these systemic issues by ensuring students have adequate supportive personnel within the school that identify with their marginalization and can design instructional and whole child experiences that can bolster students to higher academic, social, and emotional outcomes. Evidence has revealed that teachers and teaching can be the most powerful inside-of-school predictors of success for students (Barton, 2003; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995). It is imperative that teachers and other educators are equipped to address the individual needs of marginalized students to help address equity issues pertaining to the opportunity gap between White students and students of color. According to Howard (2013):

Some scholars examine cultural, structural, racial, and identity variables in evaluating how Black males see schools, others contend that local-level classroom experiences play a much larger role than what is reflected in the literature, in particular teacher attitudes and perceptions. In a closer examination of how teacher perceptions and attitudes influence Black males’ experiences in schools, Rong’s (1996) study showed that teachers’ perceptions of student social behaviors are a result of complex interactions of students’ and teachers’ race and gender. The results showed that female teachers perceived female students more positively regardless of teachers’ race. However, White female teachers perceived

White students more positively the same way that they perceived White male students more positively than Black male students, but Black female teachers made no distinction among race for students. These findings raise important questions about how teacher attitude and perception influence Black male educational outcomes. (p. 68)

Ransaw and Majors (2016) discussed how Black male students have negative feelings toward school because they lack racial pride. The authors also discussed how teachers of predominantly Black schools have low expectations of students, which students eventually adopt. These factors impact the achievement gap for Black male students and shapes their overall perception of school.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to assess how effective a high school mentoring program was in shaping the academic achievement and postsecondary planning for Black male students while understanding how Black male students perceived school and their White teachers. The mentoring program gave the participants extra support, which Black male students often need to be successful in all levels of schooling. This study was conducted to evaluate whether Black male students' perceptions of school and academic achievement changed as a result of being enrolled in a mentoring program at the high school.

Establishing culturally inclusive learning environments where Black male students feel confident and have positive relationships with peers and adults improves their self-perception and schooling experiences (Brooms, 2019). It is critical that Black male students have the support that is needed to address the many barriers that exist and

often stifle their success. The lower academic achievement of many Black students often exists because Black children experience higher rates of poverty, living in high-crime communities, unstable single parenting, and minimal parental involvement, as well as suffering from the negative effects of slavery, segregation, racism, and discrimination. Other scholarship has asserted that Black students' lower academic achievement is natural and genetically inscribed (e.g., Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Black male students need champion educational experiences where they can create their own achievement, feel culturally and academically connected, and can attain academic success (Brooms, 2019; National Education Association, 2011; Walker et al., 2012).

This study focused on students' perceptions of school and their academic achievement. This study was designed to investigate whether support through the intervention of mentoring for Black male students improved their perception of school and their overall academic performance. This study took place at a local high school in Columbia, South Carolina with a population of 1,652 students; 75% of the students were Black and 51% of the students were men.

Overview of Methodology

This study was conducted using qualitative action research through a phenomenological approach. Action research is designed to solve issues that are present in education, and, because of the nature of the problem, action research was the most suitable method to conduct the research. The study generated what Herr and Anderson (2015) called local knowledge. This study benefits practitioners who are active in the field of education. The results can allow educators to improve their practice. The study is also transferable and relevant outside of the school environment, which is a qualification

of action research. Suter (2012) described qualitative research as the most beneficial design for many reasons and gave the following examples:

- It provides depth and detail by allowing participants to go into detail about their experiences.
- It allows the researcher to capture information through observation that participants may not know to divulge.
- Responses do not have to fit into a specific context.
- It affords the researcher with more flexibility on how to steer interviews to gather additional information. (p. 342)

The researcher collected qualitative data from participants and other school partners to assess the impact of the mentoring program, the students' perception of school, and the academic growth of the students from the faculty/staff perspective. In "Mentoring Urban Black Middle School Male Students: Implications for Academic Achievement," Gordon et al. (2009) incorporated an extensive action research plan to carry out their study.

Participants were drawn from a large urban school in Connecticut. The researchers did a convenience sample, which included 61 Black eighth grade men. The researcher used a similar structure in this study with fewer participants.

Positionality

Positionality asks the question, who is the researcher in relation to their research participants and their setting? (Herr & Anderson, 2015), the researcher understood positionality to be the intentionality with which one understands the role they play in their own research study. A researcher's positionality can significantly influence the research study both positively and negatively.

In elementary school, the researcher was an above average student. The researcher was in advanced classes due to test scores, and the researcher excelled academically. The researcher grew up in a single parent home with his mother and three brothers. They were a poor family that lived in an extremely poor neighborhood. His school was all Black except for one White female student. The researcher did not have behavior issues in school because the researcher knew it would be worse when he got home. As a single parent, the researcher's mother did her absolute best caring for his three brothers and himself. She worked many jobs, and as many as three at one particular time, in his childhood to help ends meet. She did this while going to the local university to earn her nursing degree. There were many nights the researcher and his brothers were left home alone while she worked. The researcher's father was absent and lived in Texas when he was younger. The researcher never met him in his childhood. Having no male influence in his home affected the researcher emotionally. The researcher found this to be similar with many Black male students that he has met in his current role as an assistant principal.

The researcher remembers one day in fourth grade an older White man with silver hair walked into his classroom and asked his teacher to speak with him. The researcher told her that he did not know who the man was, and he was not comfortable going. She assured the researcher it was okay and that he would be set up in a room across the hall from the classroom. The researcher went with the man; whose name was Dr. Edward Berg. The researcher later found out that they were matched with each other and he would be his mentor. The researcher did not know if it was something that his mom signed him up for or if the school determined that he needed a mentor; nevertheless, he

became his mentor. The researcher remembers that his mentor would take him places and allow him to experience things that his mom could not afford. The mentor would often take the researcher to museums, plays, the park for lunch and engage in several opportunities for enrichment activities that the researcher did not have access to. The researcher is incredibly grateful for his first mentor. It was a wonderful experience, and as he reflects on it today, he realizes it shaped a large part of who he is as a professional and a mentor. It is important for students to have another advocate, a voice to hear, and an ear to listen. The need is far greater when the student(s) are missing a level of support in their personal life. It is important to note that Dr. Berg is a White man. While the researcher is a Black man, he still feels that he and his mentor connected in ways that he would have never thought. Race did not impact their mentoring relationship. Growing up without a father figure positioned the researcher to desperately desire this type of positive relationship with a male figure. Researchers like Kunjufu (2005) have cited that Black male students tend to be very self-conscious and long to be accepted by their teachers and peers, which explains the need for incessant nurturing and ongoing motivational reinforcement.

Dr. Berg taught the researcher a lot about who they would later become. Mentoring is something of which the researcher is deeply passionate. The researcher believes in students, and further believes that extra support can carry them far. In the researcher's school and community, he has run multiple mentoring groups. He has organized groups at other schools and conducted workshops for professional organizations on building a sustainable mentoring program from the ground up. He has run one-to-one mentoring, group mentoring, and groups that use both methods. He has

been engaged in this type of work for over 10 years. He has a deep passion for mentoring. He understands how his passion could have also jeopardized the research study. The researcher had to be extremely objective and nonbiased to ensure a valid and ethical research study. As the primary data collector, the researcher did not allow his passion to overtake his ethics. The researcher strongly believes in mentoring when carried out with fidelity. This was the primary bias the researcher brought to the study. The researcher also had to remind himself that every Black male student did not live the same experiences that he lived as a Black male student in public schooling. Their experiences, perceptions, and needs may vastly differ from what he needed as a Black male student.

Significance of the Study

This study explored the impact a high school mentoring program had on the perceptions, academic achievement, and postsecondary planning of Black male students. The qualitative study used a phenomenological research approach to address the research questions indicated throughout the study. Conducting this study allowed the researcher to maximize opportunities to further support Black male students. The researcher conducted the research through using an 8-week mentoring program that focused on a prescribed curriculum that was referred to as BLISS. BLISS is an acronym that represents the pillars of behavior, leadership, involvement, scholarship, and service. These pillars were identified as areas that Black male students need to grow and develop by researchers such as Dubois (2011). This action research study allowed the researcher to further assess the effectiveness of mentoring in schools with large populations of students from marginalized communities.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited in sample size ($n = 12$). The study was also limited with the intervention time only being 8 weeks. Furthermore, the research study focused on a mentoring group at one high school and was not representative of mentoring programs ran throughout the state of South Carolina. This study was also limited in the focus group as it only studied Black male students instead of minority men. All of these factors in some way limited the results. Because of this, results cannot be generalized across all schools, districts, states, ethnicities, or minority subgroups. The focus of this research study was intended to examine the results of the research questions and use them as a practitioner within the researcher's school and school community.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 offered the overall framework of the study and outlined the purpose and demand for the study. Chapter 2 highlights a review of the literature of the guiding ideas that serve as the foundation for the research study. Chapter 3 answers the questions “why” and “how” the study takes place by describing the setting and methods of the study. It also highlights the process used to for data collection. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, highlights the themes of the study, and decodes the results. Chapter 5 includes a plan of action for showcasing the results and acknowledges the implications for further study.

Definitions of Terms

The definitions highlighted in this section represent common terms used throughout the study.

Action Research: Research method that affords educators the opportunity to operate in their professional capacity while simultaneously conducting research that often yields major implications for teaching and learning (Burns, 2007).

Critical Race Theory (CRT): CRT is an analytic tool and theory that should be used to unpack, shed light on, problematize, disrupt, and analyze how systems of oppression, marginalization, racism, inequity, hegemony, and discrimination are pervasively present and ingrained in the fabric of policies, practices, institutions, and systems in education that have important bearings on all students (Milner, 2013).

Black Male Students: Black male students in this study are synonymous with Black boys that are in secondary school or younger. Black male students, for the sake of this study, are not to be confused with Black adult men.

Cultural Competence: An approach that empowers individuals to examine and critique how diverse groups make connections to the real world beyond their preconceived beliefs. It emphasizes systemic success and helps marginalized individuals maintain important identity characteristics that form aspects of who they are, who they want to be, and who they are becoming (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Culturally Relevant Teaching/Pedagogy: A pedagogical framework that was established in the research literature that can help educators meet the needs of students living in poverty. Some of the most compelling research in the area of responding to the needs of students whose outside-of-school experiences are complexly difficult is grounded in culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Mentoring: The positive relationship with and contribution by a nonparental adult to the life of a young person (Gordon et al., 2009).

The Movement Mentoring Program: The Movement Mentoring Program was the intervention in this study. Formally, the program was designed to support student participants socially, emotionally, behaviorally, and academically. The Movement Mentoring Program may also be referenced as The Movement within this study.

Social Bonding Theory (SBT): Social bond theory provides a framework to understand socialization and social learning by indicating that an individual's bonds to social institutions, such as family, friends, religion, schools, and the like, influence how that individual will behave (Peguero et al., 2016).

The Movement Mentoring Program: The Movement Mentoring Program is an 8-week program that participants will participate in as the studies intervention. The Movement Mentoring Program may be abbreviated as The Movement throughout the study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Mentoring is crucial in ensuring that young men of color have the fundamental skills to become successful adults (Barrett & Olle, 2016). In a study conducted by *The Mentoring Effect* it was determined that 76% of at-risk youth afforded a mentor planned to enroll in a postsecondary institution upon graduating from high school, 51% of those students obtained leadership positions within the school or community, and 48% of the students volunteered within their community. Barrett and Olle (2016) stated, “The research shows that Black male students who receive support from a caring adult exhibits prosperity” (p. 120).

The purpose of this research study was to assess the effectiveness of mentoring for Black male students as a tool that can further engage them in the learning process. Students’ academic achievement and perceptions are the primary variables being studied. This review of literature is organized into 12 sections. The review begins with an outline of the study’s theoretical framework, which guided the study. The review of literature then highlights 11 components that offered further context for the research questions that the study explored. The 11 components include: Mentoring, Academic Achievement, Black Male Learning Styles, Barriers to Academic Achievement, Black Male Identity, Disproportionate Discipline, Black Male Experiences in School, Motivation to Achieve,

Social Factors That Cause Chronic Underachievement, Black Male Involvement Representation, and Cultural Competency.

Background Information

Davis and Allen (2020) and Gordon et al. (2009) focused on building interventions that understand the factors that prevent Black students from excelling in the academic environment. The problem of practice this study aimed to address was that Black male students in high school are experiencing a lack of support through interventions such as mentoring programs that promote their academic achievement and postsecondary planning. Furthermore, due to this lack of support, Black male students have a negative perception of school, which is largely impacted by their perceptions of their White teachers (Von Robertson & Chaney, 2017). They are suspended and expelled disproportionately as compared to their peers (Arcia, 2007). They are also attending school at lower rates than their peers (P. C. Harris et al., 2014). Many schools are not offering interventions to help close these gaps. According to Davis and Jordan (1994):

One revealing study reports that only 2% of African American males enrolled in the public secondary school system of a large midwestern city achieved a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 on a four point scale, while more than three-fourths of Black males in that system were performing below average. These lags in academic performance are seen by some researchers as a function of Black males' inability or disinterest in fulfilling their roles as conventional learners in school settings. (p. 570)

Black male students are interested in being successful in school. There are several factors that impact and sometimes prohibit their success unfortunately. Many of these factors are

addressed during this literature review. Some of the factors that are discussed include: antischool peer pressure, positive role model, teacher expectations, Black male representation, teacher cultural competence, discipline enforced, family structure, socioeconomic status, and home environment. According to Gordon et al. (2009):

Many of these factors can be addressed directly with the support of a caring adult/professional outside of the home that pushes students towards successful academic outcomes. Mentoring is a way to cultivate academic and behavioral growth amongst large groups of students.

For mentoring programs to be effective there should be reasonably frequent contact; sufficient interactive time together; and the mentee achieves their objectives and accepts collaborative experience with the following six separate functions: Emphasis on the relationship, emphasis on information exchange, focus on facilitation, focus on confrontation, attention on their role as a model for the mentee, and attention to the vision that the mentee brings to their relationship. (p. 280)

Consistency, communication, and commitment should anchor all mentoring programs. The three Cs of mentoring, as the researcher refers to it, helped aide effective mentoring programs and practices. Mentors, mentees, and mentoring coordinators must be consistent in their effort to meet the programs goals and objectives. Communication is necessary to set clear expectations. All parties must be committed to the program's goals to assess the overall effectiveness of the program and, ultimately, see the change the program seeks to develop in its members.

Theoretical Framework

Grant and Osanloo (2014) liken a theoretical framework to the blueprint of a house. A researcher is directed with the designing and construction of the research similarly to that of an architect when designing a house. Theoretical frameworks are derived from theory. In this research study, there was two theoretical concepts that helped design and carry out this research.

Social bonding theory (SBT) plays a key role in education. Paxton et al. (2006) suggested:

Empowerment and its components consist of a constellation of elements that are essential to positive and socially appropriate development during adolescence (Chinman and Linney, 1998). For example, elements of empowerment, such as bonding to positive adults and bonding to the community, are thought to provide youth with positive traits, positive labels, and in general, a positive identity (Erickson, 1968; Bem, 1978; Rosenberg, 1998). (p. 293)

According to Peguero et al. (2016), “Social bond theory provides a framework to understand socialization and social learning by indicating that an individual’s bonds to social institutions, such as family, friends, religion, schools, and the like, influence how that individual will behave” (p. 318). SBT in education can be broken down as follows: if you give a child something of internal value to hold on to then they will do whatever possible to hold on to it (Peguero et al., 2016). That is synonymous with many things. For example, if a devoted athlete is unmotivated in the classroom and a parent, coach, administrator, or school official pulls the athlete from their sport then it is likely that the

athlete will try to regain the opportunity to play the sport by being more motivated in class.

Paxton et al. (2006) also discussed how social bonding has positive effects on developing students. Paxton et al.'s research suggested that students who experience this level of bonding or more satisfied with their lives as well. SBT was critical in my research because mentoring was the tool used to motivate students that are unmotivated.

Brooms (2018) talked about Black Male Initiative programs, which are programs for Black male students in college. These programs are designed to promote academic success and create a brotherhood among Black college male students. The article went on to suggest that Black Male Initiative programs establish student engagement for the students that actively take part. These programs are important because Black male students face challenges as it relates to race and racism as they are often stereotyped. Brooms went on to discuss how Black male students are often disengaged due to low educational expectations.

SBT suggests strong bonds to school influence better outcomes on measures of educational progress and success (Peguero et al., 2016). This research study focused on students' academic achievement as a result of the mentoring intervention, which can serve as the bonding agent to further connect the participants to their schooling.

Adolescent participation and engagement in school activities and interpersonal relationships with other students and teachers are used to represent social attachments, involvement, and emotional learning (Wehlage et al., 1989). It is also evident that weak bonds to school can have detrimental effects on educational progress, success, and attainment (Bryan et al., 2012; Crosnoe et al., 2004).

Critical race theory (CRT) suggests that racism and White supremacy is sustained over a prolonged period (Bell, 2018). CRT looks to find ways to make laws conform to equality. CRT was important in this study as it guided the argument on the achievement disparity between Black students and their peers. According to Howard (2013):

From the perspective of critical race theory (CRT) theorists, the plight of Black males in schools is an expression of racism that is endemic to North American society (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado, 1995; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). CRT theorists argue that because racism is such an integral part of society in the United States, it is embedded in practices, norms, ideologies, and values that have become symptomatic of the more explicit and formal manifestations of racialized power (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Scholars such as Duncan (2002) contend that the discourses about and on Black males are embedded in practices and values that normalize racism in the United States and create “conditions that marginalize adolescent black males, placing them beyond, *love* [italics added] in schools and in the broader society” (p. 131). Duncan’s work on the manner in which adolescent Black boys experience schools is an example of the type of work that positions their voices at the heart of the analysis, and in it, the participants shed light on how racial discrimination is a staple of their schooling experiences. (pp. 67–68)

CRT maintained significance to this study specifically as it addresses the perceptions that Black male students have of their White teachers. It further explores the system of

schooling that often lacks equity in the opportunities that are afforded to students of color.

Mentoring

Mentoring is defined as the positive relationship with and contribution by a nonparental adult to the life of a young person (Gordon et al., 2009). The National Mentorship Partnership (n.d.) defined mentoring as a “structure and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee” (p. 9). Mentoring is vital in the success of many school-aged children who are facing multiple barriers that impact potentially successful outcomes. Mentoring programs vary dependent upon the programs purpose and goals. According to Gordon et al. (2009), “Several researchers suggest that for mentoring to be effective there should be reasonably frequent contact; sufficient interactive time together; and the mentee achieves their objectives and accepts the collaborative experience” (p. 279). In the high school where this study took place in Columbia, South Carolina, the male mentoring program focused on five principles that are commonly referred to as BLISS. BLISS is an acronym for behavior, leadership, involvement, scholarship, and service. These principles were outlined as the foundation of the mentoring program because of the importance of these tenets as identified by researchers such as K. Harper (2022). Students meet with their mentor once a week as a group and as needed or as directed by themselves and their primary mentor. Individual meetings are called for several reasons to include academic performance, behavior, attendance concerns, teacher request, student leisure time, etc.

According to Perkin (2010), “History confirms Black males have been facing educational, economic, and political inequities since before the Civil War” (p. 2). Mentoring is designed to help address those inequities. Barack H. Obama, 44th president of the United States, during his tenure established several mentoring programs for minorities that addressed what he identified as opportunity gaps. The My Brother’s Keeper initiative is about “helping more of our young people stay on track. Providing the support they need to think more broadly about their future. Building on what works – when it works, in those critical life-changing moments” (The White House, 2013, para. 2). The taskforce of the My Brother’s Keeper initiative concluded that mentorship is the first call to action in ensuring that every young man is maneuvering through the cradle-to-career route (Barrett & Olle, 2016). The term “every” is significant. Many people believe that mentoring is only for students with barriers. Although these students benefit greatly from mentoring support, it is important to note that everyone needs a mentor; someone out of the home to help guide their decision making to pursue positive and healthy outcomes (Gay, 2019).

Mentoring can address several barriers that Black male students face and dispel inequities that systemically impact the Black community. Postsecondary access and attainment are among the systems that mentoring can impact. Barrett and Olle (2016) stated that “for older mentees, postsecondary education will become more of a realistic option when they receive the support they need to matriculate through school” (p. 111). Mentoring programs have varying goals and objectives. There are not a set of uniformed goals for mentoring programs. Mentoring is meant to address the specific needs of the mentee(s). Barrett and Olle discussed several branches of mentoring including education-

based, career-based, and health-based. Through this study, the researcher sought to address educational-based mentoring.

For mentoring to be an effective intervention, the coordinator must be responsible and committed to the program's goals. The mentor coordinator is essential in ensuring that the program is running smoothly. They have the responsibilities of documentation of monitoring and facilitating bimonthly meetings to provide ongoing support and training for the mentors (Barrett & Olle, 2016). It is also important for mentoring coordinators to plan events and activities that engage students. The National Mentorship Partnership (n.d.) have suggested several events and activities for mentees. Mentees should have field experiences away from the school to engage them with the content so that they can make connections to their world and what they are learning. There should also be a focus on leadership through workshops and other training mechanisms. Mentoring groups should also aim to develop camaraderie among the mentees through team building exercises. Parents should be included by incorporating parent nights and other informative sessions. Mentoring groups should have a focus on college and career readiness and goal setting so that students can begin planning for the future. Students in mentoring programs should also have the opportunity to meet and network with business professionals to begin building a professional learning network (National Mentorship Partnership, n.d.).

Barrett and Olle (2016) suggested that mentoring programs should subscribe to a curriculum that focuses on the history of the mentoring program, the programs practices and procedures, the roles and responsibilities of each member, expectations for communication, and networking. There should also be an understanding of the mentoring programs curriculum content and a crisis management plan.

Mentoring is crucial in ensuring that young men of color have the fundamental skills to become successful adults (Barrett & Olle, 2016). Mentoring acts as an additional support for individuals who may need it. It teaches skills that students may not have otherwise learned or gained access to. Individuals who have a mentor have another voice that helps guide their decisions. Black male students who receive support from a caring mentor exhibit prosperity (Barrett & Olle, 2016). Black male students deserve a committed and compassionate mentor—especially those who are facing barriers that could negatively impact their future success.

Academic Achievement

Black male students often comprise the lowest performing group within a given school district, and are at significantly higher risk of dropping out than any other U.S. student (Dove, 2009). Extra support is often necessary for Black male students to experience academic success. According to Toldson et al. (2009), “In a study to assess the impact of afterschool programs, researchers found that a program consisting of tutoring, social skills training, group counseling, recreational, and cultural activities strengthened the academic achievement of African American male students” (p. 200). K. Harper (2022) further substantiated Toldson et al.’s (2009) perspective. It is necessary for non-Black educators to be multiculturally competent when teaching Black students so that they grasp aspects of the culture that otherwise become misunderstood. This helps with incorporating teaching strategies that are effective for Black students. Black male students, similarly to other groups, value making personal meaning out of classroom experiences. When they connect with what is going on in the classroom then they become more engaged. As cited in Toldson et al. (2009), “Jenkins (2006) suggested that culturally

congruent in-class experiences are distinctively important for Black male students because of unique family and societal factors that can directly affect their engagement in school” (p. 201).

As it pertains to academic achievement, access is a very important topic when it relates to Black male students’ success. Access to academic experiences through the curriculum, teachers, and other school activities is of particular importance for students such as African American boys, who are already marginalized in school settings (Davis & Jordan, 1994). Black male students must have the opportunity to engage in meaningful and innovative curriculum strategies to further captivate them in their academic coursework. Black male students are often disinterested in basic classroom settings due to low multicultural competence among teachers, and inexperience with culturally relevant teaching strategies that bind Black male students to the curriculum.

Academic achievement among Black male students is often impacted by several barriers. According to Davis and Jordan (1994), some of these factors include but are not limited to attendance, socioeconomic status, Black representation for faculty/staff, discipline, class size, teacher motivation, and teacher attendance.

Each of these factors impact potentially successful outcomes for Black male students. Educators must commit to the success of all students to close the opportunity gap that exist between Black male students and students of other demographics. Bridges (2012) stated, “we can only achieve success if we collaborate for the good of African American males, for the good of family, and for the good of society as a whole” (p. 282). Educators should work together to ensure Black male students have equal access and equal opportunity to be successful in the classroom.

Black Male Learning Styles

Black male students understand and value education but feel disconnected from schooling, and the feeling of belonging is crucial for academic success (Ransaw & Majors, 2016). There is scientific evidence that suggests girls learn differently than boys; one researcher asserted the biological stream reports that brains of men and women are just wired differently (Cleveland, 2011).

There has also been evidence that has supported how boys' hormones, testosterone, and dopamine levels impact their impulsivity and behavior within the classroom (McDougal, 2007). Black male students face those challenges and then are even further impacted by the social context in which they live and view school. Rasnaw (2016) discussed how girls' cerebral cortexes are dedicated to verbal functioning while boys' cerebral cortexes are dedicated to spatial awareness. He further illustrated how boys' hormones do not bring a sense of calm and testosterone increases their physical activity. Lastly, Rasnaw talked about how girls are more in tune with fine motor skills as compared to boys. This is very important when determining instructional strategies and lesson plans for schools and classrooms that include Black male students.

If you look at the characteristics of male learning styles, they tend to mirror kinesthetic preferences (Ransaw & Majors, 2016). Black male students often subscribe to kinesthetic learning styles. Black male students also learn from visual and verbal learning styles. According to Rasnaw (2016), "These indicators reflect that Black males may prefer information presented to them in a way that helps them see the world so as to adapt to it in ways that are meaningful to them" (p. 4).

Haynes et al. (1988) conducted a study on the use of specific learning strategies among Black high school students to relate it to their academic achievement. The researchers in this study believed that focusing on metacognitive learning strategies improved academic outcomes for students who had access to cognitive monitoring training but those strategies were not incorporated for Black students. Instead, there was a focus on traditional study habits. The study revealed that cognitive training and motivation was significantly related to the learning process. Low achieving Black students benefited from cognitive monitoring training and metacognitive strategies (Haynes et al., 1988). It is important for Black male students to have access to learning strategies that benefit all groups. There is no one-size-fits-all approach and it is vital for Black students to have the opportunity to learn different strategies to advance their learning capacity.

Barriers to Academic Achievement and Positive Behavior

Desegregation brought new challenges to Black students in the 1950s. After *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) Black and White students began attending school together. Black students began attending schools that had a predominantly White teacher faculty, which became an issue due to a lack of multicultural competence among White staff members (Pruitt, n.d.). The curriculum was also not relevant to Black culture. Black family involvement also declined during this time as Black families did not live near the school (Harmon & Ford, 2006). Along with the historical significance of the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* (1954) decision, there was a rise in poverty within the Black community. Wilson (1987) stated that poverty within the Black community yielded a breeding ground for drug abuse,

domestic violence, higher birthrates, health problems, and disproportionate of arrests, incarcerations, and suicides. These ills in turn led to increases in crime, addiction, welfare dependency, school dropout, and unemployment for African Americans in U.S. urban areas.

Families began to fall apart during this time. Harmon and Ford (2006) supported this claim by suggesting that the lack of Black male students who demonstrated responsible, legitimate, adult behavior had a profoundly negative impact on Black male students who had since childhood been overwhelmed with unconstructive images and stereotypes of Black male students in the media.

Beyond the historical barriers that stifled achievement for Black male students were other factors that made schooling a challenge. White teachers of Black students often held low expectations of Black students' academic ability. This resulted in low performance and doubt among Black students. Inequalities as it pertains to access to resources and supports also prohibited Black students from maximizing their academic potential. Non-Black teachers often feel that they have to teach Black students in a way that suppresses their ability to think and problem solve. They also refer Black students to Advanced Placement and honor's courses less frequently as compared to their White students.

The media has also served as a barrier to Black male achievement as the social concept of school and success in school within hip hop culture is vastly negative or seen as a form of assimilation (McClain, 2020). According to Ford and Moore (2013):

Media and entertainment are the major forces transmitting these unflattering, anti-intellectual images of, and beliefs about, African American men to young people

of all races and cultures. Exposure to these images can cause young African American males to have poor views of themselves and their communities as well as substandard achievement orientations toward and attitudes about their scholarly aptitude. (p. 8)

Young Black male students have often had to navigate through a history of racial discrimination in this country, challenges in family structure, low income, and in many cases extremely violent neighborhoods communities and schools (Rhoden, 2017). All of these factors impact Black male students' achievement in school as well as their behavior. Despite these challenges Black male students are still able to achieve in school. Having strong and trusting relationships within the school helps Black male students achieve at a higher rate. For these relationships to be successful there must be mutual trust between the student and adult. According to a *Forbes Magazine* article from 2013, trust is the most important element in business and is the basis for strong relationships (Peshawaria, 2013). Without this trusting relationship, it would be very difficult to get through to students who have barriers that prevent their success in school. Trusting someone or something allows a certain level of vulnerability that can lead to positive development (Rhoden, 2017).

Black Male Identity

Self-concept is another factor that affects Black male achievement. Constructs of the self, including gender, race, and others' perceptions all contribute to the chronic underachievement of Black male students (Zamani-Gallaher & Polite, 2010). When Black male students become aware of their teachers and peers' perceptions of them, they tend to become a self-fulfilling prophecy and identify in those ways. Some of these

perceptions include non-Black teachers projecting their low expectations onto Black male students. According to Zamani-Gallaher and Polite (2010), Osborne (1999) pointed to the relationship between African American males' identification with academics and their lack of support in schools as primary obstacles to these boys' success in school. He further argued that school reinforces negative stereotypes of Black male youth, leading them to develop oppositional identities that reflect those stereotypes and make them agents in their own failure.

As it pertains to family structure, adolescents who have more frequent contact with their parents had higher levels of academic competence (Toldson et al., 2009). It is important for students to have access to their parents and to communicate with them about what is going on with their schooling. Additionally, Black male students who are raised in homes with authoritative parental styles appear to be better psychologically and behaviorally adjusted and to have higher rates of academic achievement than boys in neglectful homes (Mandara, 2006).

Disproportionate Discipline

Black students, particularly Black male students, are much more likely to be suspended from school than students of other races or ethnic groups (Arcia, 2007). Black male students receive more frequent and harsher disciplinary actions by their teachers (Stinson, 2006). This directly impacts student academic performance. If students are suspended from school, then they likely will not have access to the work that they are missing. When they return, they are behind and their grades then begin to suffer. Additionally, it becomes an issue of equity and discrimination when non-Black students are not suspended for the same or similar infractions as Black students. There is a trickle-

down effect that causes students to be watched more closely once they have been suspended from school previously and for nonnegregious acts (Morrison et al., 2001). Discipline disparities should not prohibit Black male students from earning a quality education similar to that of their non-Black peers. The discipline that is enforced on Black male students is largely due to stereotypes that are projected onto the Black community. Black students are often suspended repeatedly because of the culture of toughness and defiance which is interpreted as disrespect by school faculty and staff (Arcia, 2007).

Black Male Student Experience in School

Education is not the same bridge to adult status for Blacks as it is for Whites (Mickelson, 1990). Black male students do not reap the same rewards and benefits as their non-Black peers. This is often the reason Black male students have negative experiences in school. It is also the reason they often fail to maximize their potential inside the classroom. Mickelson's (1990) work suggested that Black youths perceive the opportunity structure differently from middle class Whites and consequently tend to put less effort and commitment into their academics. One fact that has been identified through the literature is that employment and income impact the possibilities of certain ethnic groups obtaining a high or desirable level of education. Black families are a largely affected group based on historical factors that exist between Whites and Blacks considering the education and opportunity gaps.

Black male students generally earn lower grades, drop out more often, and attain less education compared to their White counterparts (Ogbu, 1978). There are several factors that generate the inequities that exist. One of the most inherent factors is the social

perception of education within the Black community. Academic achievement is linked to students' accurate assessments of the returns that their education is likely to bring them as they make the transition to adulthood (Mickelson, 1990). Black male students' attitudes about school are often a reflection of how they view their families' jobs, wages, promotions, etc. They often assert that it is less equitable compared to their middle-class White peers. Their academic achievement often matches their views. According to Howard (2013):

Baldrige, Hill, and Davis (2011) explored the role of community-based organizations and how they support the academic and personal development of Black males. Their work is important because they shed insight on how Black males make sense of their schooling experiences. Critical to their accounts is the manner in which the young men discussed tolerating school as opposed to immersing themselves in it, the persistence of noncaring teachers, and a host of other social and academic obstacles that exist in schools and how they were often “smart enough to drop out” (p. 130) rather than continue to locate themselves within a space that did not foster their development, affirm their identities, and speak to their realities. However, their involvement with a community-based organization designed to assist young men transition into adulthood proved to be helpful because teachers in the program built positive relationships with them (unlike teachers in school), provided them with relevant skills and knowledge for their community context, and helped them to learn “real-world skills” that schools did not teach. (pp. 71–72)

Motivation to Achieve

If a student has low identification with academics, they are more likely to detach from academic tasks, and are subsequently more likely to perform poorly in school (Gordon et al., 2009). Black male students' identification with schooling has been shown to impact their academic motivation, school performance, and overall success (Griffin & Allen, 2006). There are several factors that impact the motivation of Black male students pertaining to their schooling. Fredericks and Eccles (2005) asserted that students who participate in extracurricular activities are more academically inclined than those who do not. Students should get involved with school-wide and extracurricular activities at every level of schooling. Fredericks et al. (2004) suggested that participation in school-based activities can translate to the learning processes in the classroom as well as other academic tasks. This often includes participation in class discussions, submitting assignments on time, behaving appropriately in class, and being present in class among other things.

Aside from participating in extracurricular and school-based activities researchers suggested that attending school has a significant impact on Black male students' motivation. Student attendance raises graduation rates and other long-term academic outcomes (P. C. Harris et al., 2014). Thayer-Smith (2007) found that school and class attendance have a positive relationship with school success.

Parental engagement and teacher expectations also impact Black male students' motivation. In the lives of Black students, parental engagement has been positively linked to student achievement (P. C. Harris et al., 2014). Parental involvement impacts academic variables such as grade point average (Marcon, 1999). For Black male students, parental

involvement has a positive correlation with their academic success (T. S. Harris & Graves, 2010). Parents of Black male students must be involved in their students' school work and communicate with them regularly about their academics. Parental engagement can be a predictor of academic achievement for Black male students. Lastly, when parents are involved in their son's education teachers have a positive perception of the student and that increases the child's potential for academic success (P. C. Harris et al., 2014).

It is suggested that teachers interact with students in such a way that aligns with their expectations of them (Rubie-Davies et al., 2010). It is important for teachers to reflect and eradicate any biases they maintain toward Black male students. Those biases guide their interactions with Black students, which impacts their performance. Teachers should have high expectations for all students. When teachers have high expectations of students, it positively impacts students' academic achievement (P. C. Harris et al., 2014). Teacher expectations are of significant importance regarding the development of positive self-images in Black students (Kincaid, 2010). In a study conducted by Garibaldi (1992), when a study of 318 teachers was conducted to research perceptions on Black male achievement respondents were asked if they believed their Black male students would go to college. Sixty percent of teachers responded in the negative. This study confirmed that no teachers are immune from holding negative, self-fulfilling prophecies about the children they teach (Garibaldi, 1992). Sixty percent of respondents were elementary school teachers. This is even more troubling as these biases systemically hold Black male students back as they may begin to subscribe to these beliefs held by the adults responsible for teaching them. Educators must raise the self-concept of Black male

students. When the successful academic experiences of young Black male students are publicly recognized, simultaneously their self-concept, self-esteem, and academic confidence is raised (Garibaldi, 1992). Teachers must change their attitudes about Black male students and their aptitude.

Social Factors That Cause Chronic Underachievement

Negative peer pressure is the number one barrier to academic achievement for African American students (Curnette, 2008). Fear of being ostracized from negative peer pressure influences many African American students to underachieve (Fordham, 1996). Academic achievement is often associated with “acting White” or “selling out” (Curnette, 2008). It is unfortunate that higher grades translate to more friends for White students but fewer for Black students (Ransaw & Majors, 2016). This leads to Black students rejecting academic achievement. Curnette (2008) gave several solutions to prevent negative peer pressure for Black male students. These solutions include parents building their child’s self-esteem and Black pride through the teaching of other Black achievers. Curnette went on to suggest other strategies for Black students and families to curtail negative peer pressure, which include Black parents associating their children with Black families that value education, celebrating Black holidays, and parents getting involved in their child’s school.

There are three specific challenges facing African American male youth—lack of positive role models, peer pressure against academic achievement, and low expectations by teachers and communities (Bridges, 2012). Black male students need role models in their schools and in the community. According to Bridges (2012):

The enlistment of mentors and role models to support Black males, especially those who share heritage and gender in common with these youth, has been shown time and again to result in classroom and life successes for African American males. (p. 283)

Bridges went on to assert that African American men must be consistent, positive role models for Black male students. He stated that Black male students must work to instill the value of academic achievement. Black male students deserve to have schools that demand high expectations of them pertaining to their standards for academic excellence.

How schools structure students' opportunities to learn has been shown to influence academic achievement (Davis & Jordan, 1994). Prior learning experiences have a significant impact on Black male achievement and educational attainment. Black male students with teachers that do not stress discipline perform better than those who have teachers that stress discipline (Davis & Jordan, 1994). Students do poorly academically when they perceive their teacher feels less accountable for their successes and failures.

Teachers with high expectations of Black male students have better student outcomes (Davis & Jordan, 1994). Altering the expectations of Black male students is one of the crucial keys to helping them overcome the academic achievement gap (Green, 2009). Garibaldi (1992) discussed several recommendations for educational stakeholders to consider for Black male students. Two of these elements directly relate to teachers' expectations of their Black male students. Garibaldi (1992) suggested the following:

Teachers should strongly encourage their African American male students in the earliest grades to pursue college or post-secondary training. Visitations to colleges

or vocational/trade schools, career day programs, and guest speakers representing white and blue collar careers are some examples of how Black male youth can be exposed to advanced educational and career opportunities. Teachers must also help to show their African American male students the relevance and applicability of coursework to one's adult years by incorporating family living skills into social studies curricula, introducing family budgeting concepts into mathematics lessons, and emphasizing business and job-related communication and writing skills instruction into language arts and English classes. (p. 9)

Through these efforts teachers can match the expectations that they have for their non-Black students. Schools can only achieve success if they collaborate for the good of African American males (Bridges, 2012). Teachers may not have all of the answers and the systems they work in are not expecting them to. It is important for every teacher to ask questions and work with other professionals to ensure every student, including Black male students, has every opportunity to be successful.

Garibaldi (1992) conducted a study of 2,250 Black male students in a New Orleans school district. The research suggested, although 95% of the respondents expected to graduate from high school, 40% of them believed their teachers did not set goals that were high enough for them. Sixty percent of respondents desired to be pushed harder by their teachers. When the parents were surveyed the responses were similar to that of the students; 80% of parents believed their students would go to college compared to only 40% of teachers. Garibaldi's study concluded that there is a large perception gap that exists between parents' and teachers' evaluations of Black male students' educational expectations and ambitions. He suggested educational systems must do more

to increase the amount and quality of communication about Black students' motivation and their desire to succeed academically.

Black male students are subjected to lower academic regard by their teachers (Stinson, 2006). Black male students are being isolated from academia because teachers and other educators do not fully grasp the extent of which barriers similar to this further marginalize Black male students and their success in school. Steele (1992) claimed school is only the place where Black male students learn but they are not considered to be valued members. Gordon et al. (2009), "Identification with academics has been described as dependent on belonging to the school where one is a significant member of the community accepted and respected in school, included in the school and includes school as part of one's self-definition" (p. 278). This becomes a challenge for Black male students because they are faced with matriculating in an atmosphere that feels hostile, which leads to defensiveness that results in poor academic performance (Steele, 1992).

Black Male Involvement and Representation

Young African American men may not always have access to role models from common backgrounds (Bridges, 2012). Because of this, postsecondary institutions have implemented strategic programs and partnerships to address the absence of Black male students in the classroom. In 2000, Mark Joseph of Greenville, South Carolina founded the *Call Me Mister* program. *Call Me Mister* aims to increase the number of Black male students entering the education profession to become teachers and role models (Holsendoph & Watson, 2007). Dr. Tom Parker, an education management professor at Clemson University, believed the greatest impact could be made by recruiting, training, and finding ways to retain Black male teachers for elementary school children

(Holsendoph & Watson, 2007). The mission of the *Call Me Mister* program is to improve achievement among Black students by tapping the leadership ability of Black male teachers. Similarly to *Call Me Mister*, Washington State University implemented the *Future Teachers of Color* program. *Future Teachers of Color* helps Black teacher candidates transition into the education profession. Bridges (2012) suggested that young Black male students need to be empowered from a Black male perspective. Bridges (2012) concluded Black male students must act immediately to ensure the advancement of future generations of Black male students and the advancement of society. He continued by urging Black male students to take initiative to collaborate to guide Black youth toward successful outcomes. He contended that Black male students cannot wait for others to do this work but that the challenge must be approached with the mindset of “it’ll be me” (Bridges, 2012).

There are not enough Black male students in the teaching field, so Black male students have limited interactions with professional Black male students (Barrett & Olle, 2016). Having representation of Black male students in schools can help Black male students navigate through challenges that they may encounter. Black male students can relate to Black male students from personal experience. When there is an absence of Black male students in schools, the school’s then have to become creative with how Black male students gain access to Black male students. Mentoring is a way to involve the community in the success of students within the school. The mentoring model affords professional Black male students’ opportunities to contribute to their communities without traveling (The White House, 2014). The majority of the U.S. teaching force is White, middle-class, and female (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).

Although this is not a negative statistic, schools and education systems must find ways to access a pool of professional Black male students to help support their Black male students' academic success. According to Howard (2013), "The importance of teachers and teaching for Black male students offers important insights; equally as notable are the ways that these young men make meaning of their schooling experiences" (p. 73).

Cultural Competency

Due to the lack of cultural competence, White teachers unknowingly create a hostile learning environment for African American students (Harmon, 2004). White teachers are not always knowledgeable about Black culture and the needs of Black students as they may not have regular contact with the Black community (Harmon & Ford, 2006). Research has suggested that Black students must have meaningful relationships with their teachers if they are to succeed academically (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Teacher education programs must train teachers in the area of cultural competence so that teachers are better prepared to develop meaningful relationships and effectively teach marginalized groups of students such as Black male students.

When teachers lack cultural competence, their biases usually take over and govern the strategies they use within the classroom and education system. According to Harmon and Ford (2006):

Teachers often consider race when forming opinions about their students and their potentials. As such, it is not unreasonable to assert that White teachers' expectations about their African American students, especially African American males, are influenced to varying degrees by the many negative beliefs and stereotypes that exist about African Americans. (p. 11)

A study of White teachers' perceptions on Black students found that White teachers prefer to teach White students and they provide more support for White students (Ferguson et al., 2001). Ferguson and Kozleski's (1998) study further claimed that White teachers perceive that African American students are less willing to put forth the necessary effort to succeed in school. These biases do not reduce the achievement gap that exists. It, in fact, expands it according to Ferguson and Kozleski.

Culturally congruent in-class experiences are distinctively important for Black male students because of unique family and societal factors that can directly affect their engagement in school (Jenkins, 2006). Education is not a one-size-fits-all system. Every student deserves to have teachers who are committed to meet their individual and specific needs (Flinders & Thornton, 2017). According to Flinders and Thornton (2017), "Teachers must address the educational needs of all students. Each student should find themselves reflected in the curriculum. When this happens, students learn and grow" (p. 240). Making curriculum more relevant and culturally sensitive allows Black male students the opportunity to develop more of an interest in academics, which will increase their performance in school and close the gaps that exist (Toldson et al., 2009).

Chapter 3

Action Research Methodology

This phenomenological action research study was designed to examine the impact that a high school mentoring program has on academic achievement and postsecondary planning for Black male participants. Through the study, the researcher also sought to examine the perceptions Black male participants have of their White teachers and their overall perception of school. Hodgkinson's (1957) stated:

The procedure, however, known as "action research" does have so much to commend it that one might well hope to see a time when school staff members would spend a part of each school day in that kind of activity as a regularly scheduled phase of school work. (p. 137)

An action research study through the method of a phenomenology was used as it allowed the researcher more flexibility to uncover the studies multidimensional research questions.

This action research study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. How does a high school mentoring program impact the academic achievement and perception of school for Black male students?
2. How does a high school mentoring program impact the postsecondary planning for Black male participants?
3. What perceptions do Black male students have of their White teachers?

Participants were referred to the school's mentoring program for various reasons, including improving grades, social skills, and behavior, and many of the students who were referred to the mentoring program had an apprehension to school. At the time of the study, Black teachers made up less than 40% of the school's faculty, and White teachers made up nearly 60%. Because of this, it was important to examine how Black students perceive their White teachers as that may serve as a barrier for participants and impact how they perceive school. Of the 96 teachers that were a part of the school's faculty, 56 were White—making up 58% of the school's teacher workforce. This is, however, much lower than the national average of 79.3% (Will, 2020). Of the 1,652 students enrolled at the high school during the time of the study, 808 were male students and 612 of those students were Black making up 37% of the student population. Seventy-seven percent of the school's total student population was Black.

The researcher was interested in analyzing the impact a structured mentoring program had on Black male students' academics, perception of school, and postsecondary planning. Due to the contrasting demographics of the student and teacher populations, the researcher also wanted to examine how Black male participants perceived their White teachers.

Research Design

By integrating learning by doing with deep reflection, action research has always held the promise of an embedded learning process that can simultaneously inform and create change (Burns, 2007; Dias & Janjua, 2018). Action research affords educators the opportunity to operate in their professional capacity, while simultaneously conducting research that often yields major implications for teaching and learning, the core purpose

of the public education system. Scholars such as Boog (2016) and Melrose (2001) addressed the ongoing argument that action research lacks rigor by arguing that the cyclical nature and focus on real practices give action research its rigor and that action research enhances problem solving, heightens professional skills, and improves self-determination. The central goal of action research is change within a system, more commonly known as social action (Boog, 2016). It combines inquiry with action as a means of stimulating and supporting change and as a way of assessing the impact of that change (Burns, 2007). Action research allows the researcher to become one with the research where they are deeply embedded in the research study.

Rationale for Selected Methodology

The research design selected for this study was phenomenology. Phenomenology is an attempt to describe our experiences as they are and to describe it exactly (Merleau-Ponty, 1956). Through the research study, the researcher examined the experiences of the participants, which is a qualifying component in a phenomenological study. Qualitative studies from a phenomenological perspective allow the researcher to be active participants in the study (Merleau-Ponty, 1956). The phenomena that the researcher inspected through this study was the perspective on school and people and impact of mentoring. The researcher used a qualitative method of surveys to collect data. Participants answered survey questions to address participant's perception of school and White teachers, and the impact of mentoring on academics and postsecondary planning. The survey was open-ended and allowed participants and other partners familiar with their level of engagement in school to provide feedback in several areas where the researcher could acknowledge common themes that emerged in the study.

In this phenomenological study, the researcher was addressing the unique perspectives of Black male students who were a part of the schools mentoring program. The researcher wanted to gain understanding on how this experience impacted students school experiences, perceptions of school, and perceptions of their White teachers. The researcher wanted to further explore how the experiences in the mentoring program impacted their postsecondary planning.

Participants in this study were surveyed on the impact of the mentoring program to better understand the uniqueness of their experiences. Other partners within the school were also surveyed to address the studies research questions. These partners include teachers, counselors, administrators, business partners, support staff, coaches, and parents. Survey responses from partners were based on their general observations of the participant while participating in the mentoring initiative.

Intervention

The intervention for this research study was The Movement Mentoring Program. The Movement Mentoring Program on the pillars that participants commonly refer to as BLISS. BLISS serves as an acronym for behavior, leadership, involvement, scholarship, and service. The researcher selected participants in the program for the research study through random selection. Participants in the mentoring program participated in biweekly group mentoring meetings that focused on the areas of behavior, leadership, involvement, scholarship, and service. Participants also met one-on-one with their mentor (i.e., the researcher) for the purpose of progress monitoring to discuss individual issues and concerns. They participated in at least one community service initiative planned by members of The Movement.

Mentoring sessions surrounded the themes of behavior, leadership, involvement, scholarship, and service because scholars such as DuBois et al. (2011) asserted the importance of these elements when designing an effective youth mentoring program. These scholars further suggested that mentoring is an effective intervention strategy due to the public's longstanding concerns regarding the negative experiences of youth in the United States; specifically, those who are from marginalized subgroups such as Black male students, which was the population of emphasis in this study.

Research Context and Setting of Study

The school that houses The Movement Mentoring Program is among one of South Carolina's largest school districts, South Carolina School District. This South Carolina School District is home to more than 28,000 students spread across 20 elementary schools, seven middle schools, and five high schools. The high school where the study took place has approximately 1,652 students enrolled. Table 3.1 reflects the demographics by ethnicity of the student population.

Table 3.1 Student Demographics by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Total	%
Black/African American	1273	77
White	157	9.5
Hispanic/Latino	107	6.5
Asian	19	1.2
American Indian/Alaska Native	4	.2
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4	.2
Two or more races	88	5.3

The high school where The Movement was housed is a magnet school where STEAMM (i.e., science, technology, engineering, arts, math, and medical) is infused and integrated into all content areas and academic standards. Students practice 21st Century Skills including collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking, all of which align with the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. Students and teachers use AVID best teaching strategies to improve their academic and personal goals (RV411, 2020).

Along with the schoolwide magnet focus, this high school was also home to three magnet themed programs and six smaller learning communities. These magnet programs and smaller learning communities have varying themes that include health science, business and law, computer science, engineering, early college, visual and performing arts, and holistic development. Students and families can also personalize their learning based on student's aptitudes and interests. These academic opportunities align with the school's vision, "We prepare today for success tomorrow" and the motto "We expect success in the 4A's; Academics, Arts, Activities, and Athletics." The faculty and staff of the school are charged with aligning teaching practices to the school's motto and vision using the schoolwide magnet themed focus of STEAMM.

The high school has several strategies and interventions in place to support the needs and ambitions of all students. Some of these interventions include tutoring, consultation with school counselors, the school psychologist, or the school social worker, referrals to family intervention counseling services, and academic

interventions. Interventions and strategies are implemented by faculty and staff. The school faculty and staff are listed by type in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Faculty and Staff by Type

Faculty and staff type	Total
Administrators	7
Classroom teachers	96
School counselors	5
Other certified faculty	3
Classified staff (noncertified positions)	32
School resource officers	2
School psychologist	1
School social worker	1

Role of the Researcher

The researcher was the facilitator and mentor for The Movement Mentoring Program. The researcher distributed all applications to participants, parents/guardians, and educators. The researcher sent surveys to respondents and served as the sole data collector. The researcher also designed the mentoring program curriculum.

The researcher has over ten years of experience in building sustainable mentoring programs. The researcher has led multiple community and school level mentoring programs that were designed similarly to the mentoring program discussed in this study. The researcher is also a facilitator of learning for schools and school leaders nationally who are looking for ways to connect and support male students of color.

Participants

This phenomenological action research study examined members who were enrolled in the mentoring program through probability sampling and a simple random sample. Two members from each grade level, ninth through 12th were randomly selected to participate in the survey. Four graduates from the most recent graduating class were selected using probability sampling to participate in the survey. As the experiences of freshmen may have yielded significant differences from alumni members of The Movement mentoring program.

The school where the research took place had a male population of 808 students at the time of the study. Of the 808 male students in the school, 611 are Black for a total of 76%, which is consistent with the schools' total Black population which is 76%.

Two students were selected from Grade 9, two from Grade 10, two from Grade 11, and two from Grade 12. The eight participants were matched with four 2020 graduates of the mentoring program for a total of 12 participants. All students selected were Black male students although the program serves a diverse male population within the high school. The 12 students sampled do not receive any support from special services. Participants have been kept anonymous throughout the research to maintain confidentiality. Table 3.3 reflects students that make up the sample.

Table 3.3 Participant Sample and Demographics

Participant	Graduating class	Gender	Race
Student A	2020	Male	Black
Student B	2020	Male	Black
Student C	2020	Male	Black

Participant	Graduating class	Gender	Race
Student D	2020	Male	Black
Student E	2021	Male	Black
Student F	2021	Male	Black
Student G	2022	Male	Black
Student H	2022	Male	Black
Student I	2023	Male	Black
Student J	2023	Male	Black
Student K	2024	Male	Black
Student L	2024	Male	Black

Data Collection Instruments

In examining how mentoring impacted Black male's academic achievement and postsecondary planning, as well as their perception of school and perception of their White teachers, The researcher used a survey to collect data on students' attitudes and perceptions of the mentoring program. Lastly, feedback was given from parents and other partners within the school who had knowledge of the student and The Movement.

Student Participant Survey Questionnaire

The researcher used a survey to collect data from the sample. Participants were surveyed in the areas of academics, postsecondary goals, perception of school, and perception of White teachers. Tables 3.4 through 3.6 reflect the survey questions listed by respondent (e.g., student, parent/guardian, faculty/staff, other) for each respondent type.

Researchers such as Biemer (2010) studied design strategies for surveys and questionnaires to ensure they were optimal and maximized total survey quality. These strategies were used in the design, implementation, and evaluation of this survey. The dimensions that are most common in Biemer's framework are accuracy, credibility,

comparability, usability, interpretability, relevance, accessibility, timeliness, completeness, and coherence. This approach maximizes data accuracy and results in optimal results.

Table 3.4 Student Survey Questions

Please define The Movement based on what it means to you personally.
Are you an active member in The Movement?
Please detail your involvement in The Movement.
How were you referred to The Movement?
What grade were you in when you were first referred to The Movement?
Why did you decide to join The Movement?
Please rate your grades prior to joining The Movement? 1 – Mostly Failing (0-59), 2 – Mostly D’s (60-69), 3 – Mostly C’s (70-79), 4 – Mostly B’s (80-89), 5 – Mostly A’s (90-100)
Please rate your grades after joining The Movement? 1 – Mostly Failing (0-59), 2 – Mostly D’s (60-69), 3 – Mostly C’s (70-79), 4 – Mostly B’s (80-89), 5 – Mostly A’s (90-100)
Please detail your overall experience in The Movement?
Why would you or why would you not recommend The Movement to other students?
Please detail any impact The Movement had/has on your academic standing if any?
How do you feel about public schooling and why do you feel that way?
What thoughts emerge as you think of your overall experience in the public school system?
How many White teachers did you have as a student at your high school?
Please describe the experiences with your White teachers that impacted you the most as a student? These may be positive or negative experiences.
Please detail the relationship that you had/have with your White male teachers.
Please detail the relationship that you had/have with your White female teachers.
What were/are your overall views of your White teachers at your high school?

If you have already graduated high school, please detail how The Movement has or has not helped prepare you for your postsecondary goals?

If you have already graduated high school please detail your current enrollment, employment, or enlistment status? Please list where you are either enrolled, employed, or enlisted and for how long. If none of these apply please give details regarding your future plans?

If you have already graduated high school, please indicate to what degree you would want to relive your high school experience. 1- I would never go back, 5- I would definitely go back

Please detail anything else you would like to share that the questions above did not give you the opportunity to discuss.

This survey was administered to participants after the implementation of The Movement Mentoring Program.

Parent or Guardian Survey

The parent/guardian survey was given to parents of the participants in The Movement who were randomly selected to participate. Parent feedback was an essential element in the study as the researcher only sees the impact of The Movement within the walls of the school. Parent/Guardian feedback allowed the researcher to address whether those qualities were consistent at home and from the parent/guardian perspective further substantiating the impact of the mentoring initiative.

Table 3.5 Parent/Guardian Survey Questions

Is your son an active member in The Movement?

How was your son referred to The Movement?

Please detail your son's involvement in The Movement.

Why did you allow your son to join The Movement?

Please rate your son's grades prior to joining The Movement? 1 - Mostly Failing (0-59), 2 - Mostly D's (60-69), 3 - Mostly C's (70-79), 4 - Mostly B's (80-89), 5 - Mostly A's (90-100)

Please rate your son's grades after joining The Movement? 1 - Mostly Failing (0-59), 2 - Mostly D's (60-69), 3 - Mostly C's (70-79), 4 - Mostly B's (80-89), 5 - Mostly A's (90-100)

Please detail your son's overall experience in The Movement?

Please detail any impact The Movement had on your son's academic standing?

If your son has already graduated high school please detail how The Movement has or has not helped prepare him for his postsecondary goals?

If your son has already graduated high school please detail his current enrollment, employment, or enlistment status? Please list where he is either enrolled, employed, or enlisted and for how long. If none of these apply please give details regarding his future plans?

Please detail anything else you would like to share that the questions above did not give you the opportunity to discuss.

The Parental Feedback Survey was administered to all parents of participants in the study. 11 parents took the survey.

Faculty and Staff Survey

Faculty and staff were surveyed on their observations of the students inside the classroom and in other areas within the school. This feedback was collected through a survey from teachers who served the randomly selected participants. Because of the nature of public schooling and the number of participants in The Movement some teachers feedback is representative of multiple students in The Movement. The survey was administered that way to protect the identity of the randomly selected participants. 17 faculty/staff members took the survey after the 8-week intervention had concluded.

Table 3.6 Faculty and Staff Survey Questions

Please detail the students current academic standing.
Please rate the students current or most recent grades.
How has or hasn't The Movement made an impact on this student pertaining specifically to his academics?
Why would you or why would you not recommend The Movement to other students?
What thoughts if any emerge as you think about other students who you are familiar with that are also participants in The Movement?
Please detail anything else you would like to share that the questions above did not give you the opportunity to discuss.

Participant Observations

The researcher also observed participants who were current students during a single classroom observation. These observations were conducted to capture themes pertaining to the research study. Participant observation allow researchers to gain the opportunity to immerse themselves within the complex minutiae of an organization or a community (Atkinson, 2017). The mentoring sessions that centered on the pillars of behavior, leadership, involvement, scholarship, and service were the premise of the expectations that were set for all students. Students were observed to assess their level of engagement within the classroom setting. Their communication and engagement with their teachers was observed during the observations. Participants' overall participation was assessed. Lastly, the participants congruence to The Movement's pillars was also examined to see how students projected the expectations of the mentoring initiative inside the classroom.

Research Procedure

Prior to the research study, the researcher submitted a request to conduct research within the South Carolina School District where the high school is located. Once this request was approved, the researcher then polled students who were held over from the previous year's mentoring cohort to assess whether they planned to take part in the mentoring program during the new school term. After identifying those students, the researcher sent an email to faculty and staff requesting recommendations for students who thought they may benefit from The Movement mentoring program. A description of the mentoring program accompanied the email so that faculty and staff understood the purpose and goals of the mentoring program and so that they did not refer students to the program arbitrarily. After identifying all students who were referred to the mentoring program, an application was sent to their parents/guardians describing the program and the nature of the student's referral. Parents and students were given a week to return the completed application if they had a desire for the student to participate in The Movement. After identifying new participants from the referrals, a schoolwide email was generated and sent to all male students in the school describing the program and offering an opportunity to attend an interest meeting. An interest meeting was then scheduled for all interested participants. Returning members and new members from referrals also attended the interest meeting. During the interest meeting, the researcher outlined the program and allowed returning members to share experiences from previous years. At the conclusion of the interest meeting interested members either accepted or rejected an application in which they had a week to return. After receiving the applications, students were welcomed into The Movement at the first official meeting of the year. There was a

total of 41 students who submitted signed applications to join The Movement mentoring program. One hundred percent of the applicants were Black male students although the program was designed for a diverse group of male students. The researcher sent names of all members to the faculty and staff so that they were aware of what students were participating in the mentoring program, which offered participants an extra layer of support and accountability.

After all participants were selected, the researcher conducted a probability sample and simple random sample by placing the names of all participants in a jar based on their academic classification (i.e., freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior, alumni). The researcher then pulled two names from each jar with the exception of the alumni jar in which four names were selected. Table 3.7 shows the breakdown of students in each jar by total number.

Table 3.7 Total Number of Students by Classification

Classification (class of)	Total
Freshmen (2024)	4
Sophomore (2023)	5
Junior (2022)	19
Senior (2021)	13
Alumni (2020)	9

Each jar included the name of every student based on their classification. There were nine total members in the program from the class of 2020, which was the most recent graduating class at the time that this study was conducted. Names were written on a .25” x 2” white strip and folded over twice. Folded strips were placed in closed jars,

which were then shaken. Two names were then pulled from each jar and placed on a flat table. All other names in jars were shredded, bagged, and discarded in a receptacle. The names left on the table were then unfolded and revealed. Pseudonyms were given to each individual student in the sample to protect their identity (see Table 3.3). Names were then shredded, bagged, and discarded.

The Movement Mentoring Program is an ongoing annual program. Graduates who were selected as a part of the probability sample all returned from previous years. Five of the eight current students (i.e., Grades 9 through 12) returned from previous years. The survey was administered after the first full month of enrollment in The Movement mentoring program. The month began at the interest meeting. This afforded new participants time to engage with The Movement.

Observations of each participant was conducted in one of their classes to assess their level of engagement within the classroom setting. Their communication and engagement with their teachers were observed during the observations as well. The participants overall participation and congruence to The Movement's pillars was also examined to see how students projected the expectations of the mentoring initiative inside the classroom setting.

After 1 month elapsed, a survey was sent to the sample, their teachers, and their parents. The survey examined the impact the mentoring program had on academic achievement and postsecondary planning. It also examined participants' perception of school and their White teachers. After the survey was concluded, the researcher compiled survey data to uncover themes that emerged pertaining to the research study.

During their 1st month of participation in The Movement, participants were a part of a community service initiative with the elementary school that is adjacent to the high school. Students read to several classes and provided mentoring support to fourth and fifth grade students.

Data Analysis

This study used a qualitative methodology to collect data. The researcher used a survey to examine the following research questions:

1. How does a high school mentoring program impact the academic achievement and postsecondary planning for Black male students?
2. How do Black male students perceive school?
3. What perceptions do Black male students have of their White teachers?

Eight current participants in The Movement mentoring program and four class of 2020 alumni of The Movement mentoring program were selected using a probability sample and were surveyed thereafter. The researcher classified the survey results into themes to answer the research questions.

Themes were derived from the collected data, which came from three data sources including a student survey, parent and guardian survey, and faculty and staff survey. After the themes were identified and separated by data source, the researcher identified all common themes.

Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology for the study. Furthermore, the chapter outlined the research procedures including data collection and data analysis. The research study took place in a suburban high school with a population of 1,652 students.

The researcher used a probability sample to determine participants from the school's all male mentoring group. A survey was used to gather data from various stakeholders with insight on the samples academic progress, postsecondary planning, and perceptions of school and White teachers. Participants were surveyed after participating in the mentoring program for 1 month.

During the month that participants were enrolled in the mentoring program, they participated in two group mentoring meetings that focused on the areas of behavior, leadership, involvement, scholarship, and service. Participants also met once for progress monitoring to discuss individual issues and concerns. Additionally, they participated in at least one community service initiative planned by members of The Movement. Members also planned one schoolwide program. The researcher also conducted one classroom observation of current participants to assess student participation in the classroom environment. The researcher analyzed the data through an inductive approach by theming the survey responses and assigning codes to those themes to further highlight points of congruence throughout the study. Chapter 4 discusses the findings from study through my analysis of the data.

Chapter 4

Presentation and Data Analysis

This chapter explores the findings of the following research questions:

1. How does a high school mentoring program impact the academic achievement and perception of school for Black male students?
2. How does a high school mentoring program impact postsecondary planning for Black male participants?
3. What perceptions do Black male students have of their White teachers?

This study was conducted using the phenomenology research design method. The researcher collected data through the use of participant surveys, parent and guardian surveys, and faculty and staff surveys. Responses from the surveys and notes from the observations were used to uncover themes that were central to the research study.

The data are broken down into themes by research question. Data are also broken down by data sources (i.e., student surveys and parent and partner surveys). As the chapter concludes, common themes across multiple research questions are analyzed. After all responses from the survey were transcribed, narratives were coded and themed to analyze and summarize results.

The Movement Mentoring Program was the intervention used in the study. It was an 8-week mentoring program facilitated by the researcher using a curriculum that is referred to as BLISS. BLISS represents the pillars of The Movement Mentoring Program and stands for behavior, leadership, involvement, scholarship, and service. Scholars such

as DuBois (2011) asserted these indicators are important for Black male students to experience success in school and in life.

General Findings and Data Analysis

Participants included eight students in the mentoring program, four graduates from the mentoring program, parents of the 12 students, teachers of the 12 students, and other faculty/staff and community members who were familiar with the 12 students who were surveyed. All 12 students participated in the survey. The survey consisted of open-ended questions that allowed students and other participants to add depth and breadth to their responses. There were also Likert scale questions to address survey respondents' thoughts on students' grades.

Addressing Research Question 1: How Does a High School Mentoring Program Impact the Academic Achievement and Perception of School for Black Male Students?

You make a living by what you get; you make a life by what you give.

—Unknown

To address the first research question, the results of the student surveys, parent and guardian surveys, and faculty and staff surveys are examined.

Student Survey Results

The survey was organized to determine students' overall experience with the mentoring program, explore their perceptions of school as well as their White teachers, and to determine the impact the mentoring program had on their postsecondary planning. When examining the student survey results in relation to the program, seven themes

emerged regarding The Movement Mentoring Program. Figure 4.1 outlines the themes that emerged related to Research Question 1.



Figure 4.1 Emerging Themes From Students Related to Impact on Academic Achievement and Perception of School

Students began the survey by defining and discussing the mentoring program from a meaningful personal experience perspective. After having the opportunity to explore the personal impact that The Movement has had on them, they were then able to explore their perception of schooling and their White teachers. Students then examined the things they liked most and least about school. Lastly, students discussed the impact that The Movement had on their postsecondary preparation.

Theme 1: Fostering of Personal Growth and Network Potential

Several themes emerged from reviewing the responses from the survey. In regard to defining The Movement Mentoring Program, 50% of respondents cited that The Movement was an avenue for personal growth and networking potential in building connections with their like-minded peers, the school, and the community.

Student B stated:

Joining The Movement allowed me to see my true leadership potential. Serving as president my senior year, I learned what it means to be a servant leader, as well as how to network, and how to ask for help. It was an opportunity to explore my strengths and weaknesses not only as a student, but as a young man overall. The Movement helped foster growth that I am grateful for today.

Student A wrote:

The Movement is a mentoring program with the capability to change the trajectory of young men's lives for years to come. It possesses a double-consciousness in that it both allows young men without positive male role models to be exposed to one, and those who have been exposed to those role models an opportunity to develop and/or sharpen their mentoring skills to create a generation of men willing to serve each other, rather than tear each other down through competition. This two-ness is essential in developing young boys into young men, and young men into young leaders.

Student F gave The Movement a five-star rating and shared:

The Movement was an eye-opening experience that helped equip me with some of the necessary skills to be a successful Black man in America. It was an

opportunity to meet other like minded people, all while making an impact on my school and the greater community.

Theme 2: Brotherhood and Positive Representation of the Current Participants

Student K stated, “Initially, I became interested in The Movement after seeing their members frequently dress up on Wednesdays. I learned about their volunteer efforts in the community and decided that I wanted to join.” Student H shared, “I wanted to grow as a person and help others grow too.”

Student I stated:

The Movement is a great experience! I enjoy the brotherhood part of it. When I see other members in the halls, we greet each other. I also enjoy facilitating service projects in our community. The Movement taught me leadership skills and showed me how to hold the people closest to me accountable.

Theme 3: Value to Males With or Without Fathers Present in Home

Student A stated:

I reluctantly decided to join The Movement under the guide of one of my mentors at that time. My reluctance was a result of my feeling that a mentoring program is for young men who matriculate without the presence of a father. The Movement assisted me in developing mentally to a place where I could understand it’s twoness. This was that while I knew what it was to be a young man, I had not yet acquiesced to what was to be required of a young leader.

Several of the males in The Movement Mentoring Program had present fathers in the home and felt like male students, regardless of having a present father in the home could

benefit from the leadership experiences that they had access to through their mentor in The Movement Mentoring Program.

Theme 4: Providing an Emotionally Safe Place for Participants

Student E shared the following insight:

My overall experience within The Movement can be defined by, but not contained to excellence. Because of this mentoring program, I was able to find a safe space to be my true and authentic self. Being in a setting where mental immaturity was not judged, but concurrently was not accepted was paramount for not only myself, but several other members of The Movement. Because service is so important to me, The Movement succeeded in providing an outlet where I could operate in the gifts that would make room for me for years and potentially a lifetime to come.

Student respondents were given the opportunity to share their thoughts on if The Movement was a program worth recommending to their peers and the impact that it had on their academic standing. One hundred percent of respondents stated they would recommend the program to their peers. Pertaining specifically to their academic standing students discussed grade checks and academic accountability in being a member of The Movement.

Theme 5: Enhancing Academic Accountability

Student C shared:

The Movement gave me academic accountability. All members of The Movement knew that grades were always a topic of conversation, and that we would always be pushed to perform as well as possible. Scholarship is one of our pillars so we must be focused on our academic standing at all times.

Students had the opportunity to reflect on their academic standing prior to and after being a part of The Movement and out of nine responses three cited improvement. The other six cited no change as they were already making As and Bs in their courses. No student cited a drop in grades. The two respondents who cited that they were making primarily Cs or less before joining The Movement indicated their grades improved after joining The Movement.

Theme 6: Community Service Opportunities

Students had the opportunity to provide service to the adjacent elementary school and engage in a school wide initiative by reading to several classes to promote literacy and mentoring the fourth and fifth grade students at the school. Some evidence of the community service programming is captured next.

Student I stated:

I enjoy facilitating service projects in our community.

Student E shared the following:

Because service is so important to me, The Movement succeeded in providing an outlet where I could operate in the gifts that would make room for me for years and potentially a lifetime to come.

Theme 7: Public Schooling Is Essential

Students cited learning experiences, diversity, real world application, government funding, and potential for personal growth in their responses about their personal feelings about the public education system and pertaining to the thoughts that emerge from their personal experiences within public education.

Student respondents were given the opportunity to reflect on their public-school experiences and share how they perceived those experiences as well as how they perceive school in general. Several themes emerged from the students' responses. Next are several responses that indicated students' thoughts on the first two survey questions pertaining to students' perception of school. Student E stated:

Public schooling is a great public investment. It has the capacity to prepare students for the "real world." However, I would be remiss, without acknowledging the unequal funding that schools receive. All schools must receive adequate funding to support its teachers, and students, regardless of the location or demographic.

Student G stated:

I like public schooling. It helps me as I prepare to pursue my long term goals and it is inclusive of all ethnicities and individuals from varied backgrounds. This is indicative of the real world so I think it's great preparation.

Student A shared:

Public schooling is essential to the coming-of-age of all children. The public school system is an environment that provides no shelter from the real world, and is revelatory to current issues in today's education system. Teen pregnancy, rape, racial disparity, academic unpreparedness, and unequal treatment by race. What qualifies humans is not only knowledge, but also experience. Public schools are a breeding ground for leaders, because there is calcified miseducation that must be broken down and corrected.

Student J stated, “Public schooling has helped me build my character and work ethic. It has also allowed me to figure out what I’m good at and what I want to do with my life.”

Student B shared:

In my experience, public schooling afforded me a lot of opportunities. I was blessed to attend schools that had a plethora of resources for its students. I particularly enjoyed the magnet programs. Being a part of the magnet program was essential for me as I believe we had more opportunities than students who were not in that program.

Student respondents were asked how they felt about high school and further asked to detail what they liked most and least about school. The following themes emerged to highlight these topics. Respondents cited many positive memories associated with their overall feelings about high school. Many respondents classified their feelings about high school as positive and fun. Others reflected on memories that really impacted their experiences in high school. Cited next are several responses directly from respondents to illustrate their general feelings of high school.

Student L stated, “High school is an instrumental part of life. It’s a turning point for a lot of people, and an opportunity for people to get a glimpse of adulthood, without the full responsibilities.” Student K stated, “High school helped me find myself. I was able to meet many people of different cultures and it helped me to be who I am today. My experience was a great one.” Student D stated:

High school was an opportunity for me to find myself, as well as becoming comfortable with who I truly am. High school is an opportunity for one to find

him/herself in a sheltered setting, prior to entering into the real world and risking a life-altering mistake in efforts to find self.

Table 4.1 highlights items respondents identified as liking most and least about their experience in school.

Table 4.1 What Students Like Most and Least About School

What do you like most about school?	What do you like least about school?
Community	The same people are in all of my classes
Meeting new people	Testing
Participating in events and activities	Hours of studying
Trying new things (e.g., organizations, events, activities)	Over-dependence on tests and major assignments
Athletics	Work load
Family atmosphere	Lack of information to students about school events and activities
Diversity	Disparities in treatment of Black and White students

The responses pertaining to what students liked most and least about their experience in school had very few similarities. Every response offered something different to the research. Collectively these responses are representative of a comprehensive school's student body.

Parents, Guardians, Faculty, and Staff Survey Results

The survey was organized to determine parents' and other school partners such as faculty and staff's overall experience with the students' involvement with The Movement Mentoring Program, explore their perceptions of school as well as their White teachers,

and to determine the impact the mentoring program had on their postsecondary planning. See Figure 4.2 for the seven themes that emerged pertaining to Research Question 1.



Figure 4.2 Emerging Themes From Parents Related to Impact on Academic Achievement and Perception of School

Students' parents were surveyed to capture their reflections on The Movement Mentoring Program and the impact it had on their students. Teachers, school counselors, other certified faculty, staff, and coaches were also given the opportunity to reflect on the impact The Movement has had on students that they are familiar with detailing students' academic standing and the overall impact of The Movement.

Parents who were surveyed are the parents of the students who were also surveyed. In detailing their students' involvement with The Movement Mentoring

Program, parents stated their students participated in all scheduled meetings, held leadership roles, assisted with community service initiatives, participated in schoolwide events, mentored students at the neighboring elementary school, and participated in a reading initiative for elementary students.

Theme 1: Establishing Leadership Potential

Every school club or organization has a culture that is attached to it. When members of the school community encounter the group or its members certain thoughts arise. When asked to identify the culture of The Movement, faculty and staff members suggest that members of The Movement are leaders on campus. Every young man is not only respectful of themselves, but also of those around them. Members of The Movement are more self-aware than their peers and they understand what their purpose is, which is one of the most amazing things about the program. One teacher stated, “These young men are allowed to explore their purpose in the confinement of a safe place that this program provides.”

Theme 2: Community Service Opportunities

One respondent stated:

When my son was in The Movement, he was assigned a mentee at the elementary school next door. I didn’t realize how much of an impact he had on the students until I saw his mentee at a football game, and I saw how excited he was to see my son on the field getting ready for the game. The Movement showed my son the importance of community service and how to enhance his leadership skills. This mentoring program allowed my son to be involved in so many opportunities.

Participants in The Movement Mentoring Program participated in a community service initiative where they mentored fourth and fifth grade students at the neighboring elementary school. They would go over once a week during lunch time to extend themselves in various ways including, reading, play, conversation, and guidance. The community service initiative was established through the mentor and the elementary school's administration.

Theme 3: Academic Agency

All parents cited improvement or no change in their students grades after joining The Movement. All students whose grades did not improve were making As and/or Bs prior to joining The Movement. Parents stated that The Movement helped their students focus more intently on their academic standing. Parents also stated The Movement motivated students to sustain high academic standing. One parent said, "It gave him better focus but he has to personally improve his work ethic." Another parent stated, "The Movement helped my son become more focused on academic achievement as he wanted to serve as a role model for his peers." A parent also commented:

The Movement has increased our son's motivation to improve his grades, challenge himself and focus. My son was strong academically prior to joining the organization. So, I think he was able to encourage the other members and was a great example academically.

Yet another said, "He has always been a student in high academic standard. The Movement continues to reinforce that mentality." A final parent mentioned, "The Movement encouraged my son to continue striving to make good grades and reminded him that as a student-athlete, the 'student' comes first."

Teachers, school counselors, other certified faculty, staff, and coaches were given the opportunity to reflect on the impact The Movement has had on students that they are familiar with detailing students' academic standing and the overall impact of The Movement. When asked to detail students current academic standing, faculty and staff of the students in The Movement stated that the young men in The Movement are very well-rounded young men who knew the importance of the role that academics play in their present state as students and in their future as they pursue their goals.

Theme 4: Fosters Brotherhood Among Participants

One parent said, "I felt it was a great program for young Black male students. Where they could form friendships and learn valuable life lessons." A different parent stated:

We allowed our son to join The Movement to be a part of a brotherhood which positively impacts the community by giving back through service projects, demonstrating high educational standards and appropriate dress attire. The Movement has great qualities for transforming MEN into GENTLEMEN!

One parent respondent stated:

My son really enjoyed The Movement. He shared that he was hesitant initially but really enjoyed the mentorship and camaraderie within the organization. He also said he encouraged others to join as well. If he could do it all over again, he would do it all 4 years. He met great people and bonded with other great young men. He feels it's an opportunity every young man at the high school should be involved in.

Theme 5: Students Develop Holistically

Faculty and staff felt strongly that The Movement had a positive impact on students' academics. There were common themes that emerged from faculty and staff respondents. Respondents shared that The Movement gives students the tools to be an effective leader in class and across campus. It consistently encourages young men to understand and value their academic performance. Faculty and staff continued to contend that The Movement provided the students with opportunities that allowed them to share their knowledge and skills with others through a variety of community service initiatives. Students in The Movement are more aware of their grades than their peers and they carry themselves in a way that is representative of young professionals.

One school partner added:

I firmly believe that The Movement is a game changer for many of the males at our school. One can distinctly see how this program is not only beneficial to the students that they serve, but also to the entire community. The program hosts a variety of events that allow our young males to have a voice as well as foster the self-awareness skills that they focus on within the program. Every male that I have encountered that is part of this program or has been part of the program is a well-rounded young man. It is my prayer that this program will stick around and begin to serve even more males at our school.

Theme 6: Purpose Driven

One hundred percent of faculty and staff cited that they would recommend The Movement to other students in the school because it affords students the opportunity to gather and develop goals and achieve personal and collective objectives. They added that

The Movement is beneficial and impactful for students who need additional support, accountability, and access to new opportunities. One teacher added the following comment:

I would absolutely recommend The Movement to any male student, because it is a program that fosters academic and personal excellence among the young men that are being served. This program also provides young men with a variety of opportunities to perform acts of service as well as learn from members of their own community. I firmly believe that every young man that encounters this program comes out on top, due to the nurturing and hands-on approach that the leaders of this program provide.

Theme 7: Students Project the Pillars of the Program

All students who are referred to The Movement do not necessarily join due to personal conflicts. A mentoring program is not right for every student. There is a balanced commitment that has to be made for mentoring to be effective. Parents who were surveyed all agreed with their students that the mentoring program would meet a need for their student. In reflecting on why parents allowed their student to join The Movement, one cited the following, “Because I believed that it would surround him around other positive young men that would encourage him to excel academically. It also allowed him to be engaged in serving and representing his community, along with enhancing his character.”

Addressing Research Question 2: How Does a High School Mentoring Program Impact Postsecondary Planning for Black Male Participants?

To address the second research question, the results of all the surveys will be examined.

Student Survey Results

The survey was organized to determine students' overall experience with the mentoring program, explore their perceptions of school as well as their White teachers, and to determine the impact the mentoring program had on their postsecondary planning. When examining the student survey results in relation to the program, two themes emerged regarding The Movement Mentoring Program (see Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3 Emerging Themes Regarding Impact on Postsecondary Planning

Students reflected highly positively when detailing how The Movement helped prepare them for their postsecondary goals. Students suggested The Movement gave them the tools necessary to reach their goals. They further added that The Movement provided them with the skill of networking with both professionals and students. Students'

reflections continued to add that they learned how to advocate for themselves and their peers.

Theme 1: Culture of Postsecondary Readiness and Success

Students reflected highly positively when detailing how The Movement helped prepare them for their postsecondary goals. Students suggested The Movement gave them the tools necessary to reach their goals. They further added that The Movement provided them with the skill of networking with both professionals and students. Students' reflections continued to add that they learned how to advocate for themselves and their peers.

Student B suggested, "I often find myself seeing an opportunity, and knowing that I have the personal drive and determination to seize the chance. The Movement provided me with greater confidence, and poise." Student A offered the following thoughts related to how The Movement has prepared him to pursue his postsecondary goals. Student B suggested, "I often find myself seeing an opportunity, and knowing that I have the personal drive and determination to seize the chance. The Movement provided me with greater confidence, and poise." Student A offered the following thoughts related to how The Movement has prepared him to pursue his postsecondary goals. Student A said:

The Movement has prepared me for the countless leadership opportunities that I will engage in, mentoring projects that I will organize, and nonprofits that I will start. By touching my life, The Movement will touch the lives of thousands through me and others.

One hundred percent of graduates who were surveyed cited that they were either enrolled in a 2- or 4- year college or university, or employed part time or full time. Table 4.2 identifies graduate respondents' postsecondary status.

Table 4.2 Graduate Student Postsecondary Status

Student	Postsecondary status
Student A	Enrolled at 4-year university in GA Employed full time
Student B	Enrolled at 4-year university in SC
Student C	Enrolled at 4-year university in DC
Student D	Enrolled at 4-year university in SC

Theme 2: Heightened Sense of Self-Efficacy and Leadership Capability

Student D said:

The Movement impacted my life in many ways but I think it motivated me the most by making me okay with standing out and being a leader whether that be with words or through deed. The Movement has helped me stay focused knowing that I have people looking out for me and pushing me to be great. I would recommend The Movement because it gives leadership to male students who may need it and also because it provides multiple avenues to participate in school-wide activities. The Movement focuses on the pillars of behavior, leadership, involvement, scholarship, and service and all male students need to project those things to be successful to and through high school. The Movement helped me understand that.

Parent and Guardian and Faculty and Staff Survey Results

Parents were surveyed on the first two research questions areas to further explore the mentoring program impact postsecondary planning for Black male participants? The survey was organized to determine parents' overall experience with their students' involvement with The Movement Mentoring Program, explore their perceptions of school as well as their White teachers, and to determine the impact the mentoring program had on their postsecondary planning. As it pertains directly to research question two themes emerged (see Figure 4.4).

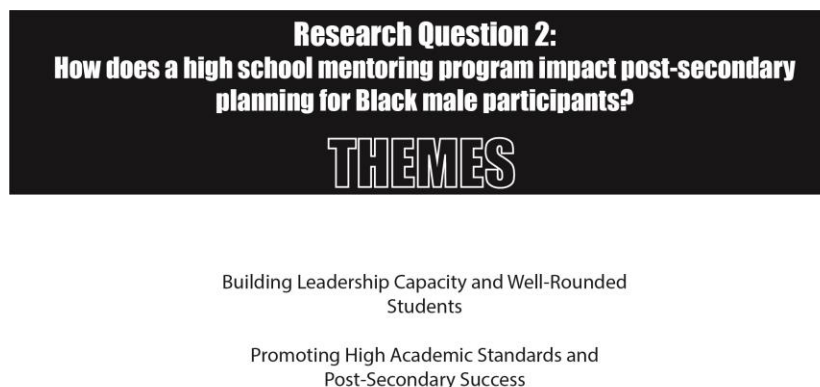


Figure 4.4 Emerging Themes Regarding Impact on Postsecondary Planning

Theme 1: Builds Leadership Capacity and Well-Rounded Students

Parent respondents were asked to detail their students' preparedness to pursue their postsecondary goals as a part of the survey. The following themes emerged as parents reflected on their students' preparedness to pursue their post-high-school ambitions. Several parents cited that The Movement has helped their student to become more of a leader. Students in The Movement are very well spoken and they are not afraid

to speak up and advocate for themselves or others. Parents added that The Movement is a leadership program that teaches male students the value in activism, which will carry over into their college and/or career aspirations. One parent added, “The Movement’s core principles of BLISS (behavior, leadership, involvement, scholarship and service) will help him excel anywhere.” Other themes that emerged in parents’ reflection of their students’ postsecondary preparedness were that students built positive habits and made healthy lifestyle choices. Parents overwhelmingly stated that The Movement helped build confidence and self-esteem in students. They also shared that The Movement empowered them to project a boldness in proclaiming their values and morals.

Parents also stated that the leadership of the program was very instrumental in assisting students with their postsecondary goals such as college admissions, scholarships, and internships. Parents exclaimed they were looking forward to their students’ continued participation in The Movement. One parent added the following comments:

I hope my son can impact someone else’s life to the level that his mentor has done for him. I believe this program is great for all young Black males, especially for the males who do not have a lot of support at home. This program could expose them to new environments and new opportunities. I am truly grateful for this opportunity.

Theme 2: Promotes High Academic Standards and Postsecondary Success

Parents further illustrated their students’ preparedness for their postsecondary goals by highlighting students current or anticipated enrollment, enlistment, or employment status. Table 4.3 highlights students’ status.

Table 4.3 Student Current or Anticipated Postsecondary Status

Student	Postsecondary status
Student A	Enrolled at 4-year university in GA Employed full time
Student B	Enrolled at 4-year university in SC
Student C	Enrolled at 4-year university in DC
Student D	Enrolled at 4-year university in SC
Student E	Accepted into 4-year university in SC
Student F	Accepted into 4-year university in SC

Addressing Research Question 3: What Perceptions Do Black Male Students Have of Their White Teachers?

To address the third research question, the results of the student surveys are examined.

Student Survey Results

At the school that the research took place there is a large population of White teachers as compared to students. The researcher decided it was important to explore how students perceived their White teachers to determine whether there was any impact on the academic success or perception of school for the participants. Four themes emerged (see Figure 4.5).

**Research Question 3:
What perceptions do Black males have of their White teachers?**

THEMES

Limited Prioritization of Learning
Outcomes for Black Male Students

Lack of Cultural Competence

Relationships with White Teachers Vary by Gender
(supported by White males and fractured with
White females)

Black Male Students and White Teachers Can
Develop Positive Student/Teacher Relationships

Figure 4.5 Emerging Themes Regarding Perception of White Teachers

When asked how many White teachers students had while at the school the average number was 6.4 out of a possible 8 annually, keeping in mind that students ranged from Grades 9–12. Three students did not list a numerical value. They instead suggested that they had a lot of White teachers and too many to count. This is important in further understanding the demographic makeup of the teacher population at the school.

Theme 1: Prioritization of Learning Outcomes for Black Male Students

Students A and F shared the impact of White teachers led to a lack of depth and breadth in teaching standards, no impact at all due to a lack of ownership and accountability for the learning of Black students, and that Black student learning had to be a priority for the student and not left up to the teacher.

Theme 2: Cultural Competence

In exploring the impact on cultural differences that exist when students and teachers differ in that capacity, the following response details how cultural competence can impact student–teacher relationships. Student A stated:

White male teachers were often intimidated by not only my size, but my intelligence. White male teachers struggled with my dominant personality, and the lack of submissiveness that I displayed in comparison to what they may have historically been accustomed to. This was the case for all of my White male teachers except for one, who ironically taught African American Studies during my senior year. He became the epitome of not only what a White teacher should be, but what a teacher should ultimately be. He was attuned to our needs as Black students and he supported us through challenging content and challenging times in our world.

Student A further stated:

I once overheard several Caucasian teachers discussing my future in the hall who were unaware of my listening. I witnessed them discussing the idea that I would not even make it to college, let alone succeed in life. Needless to say, I spoke to my mentor in The Movement and he advised me that he would support me in having conversations with each of them so that I could let them know how their comments made me feel. I got each of them in a room individually with my mentor, and cleared those rooms as I should have.

CRT and cultural competence intersect in that scholars such as Milner (2013) asserted that CRT is designed to dismantle the discrimination that is pervasively present

and ingrained in the fabric of policies, practices, institutions, and systems in education that have important bearings on all students” (p. 1). Other scholars such as Gloria Ladson-Billings have contended a similar notion that there are systemic conditions within schools and communities that effect the outcomes and opportunities for success for students of color. It is significantly important for action researchers to address the barriers that impact the success of students from marginalized groups such as Black males who are among the lowest performing subgroups globally.

Theme 3: Relationships With White Teachers Vary by Gender

The data was overwhelmingly positive when detailing students’ relationships with White male teachers. Eighty seven percent of students responded positively about their relationships with their White male teachers. Student C stated:

I had overall positive relationships with my White male teachers. A few of them I had for multiple school years, so I developed a positive relationship over the years. My biology teacher even wrote multiple recommendation letters when I applied for college.

Another student suggested much of the same by stating, “My male White teachers have all been supportive of me in the things I’ve done while at school. I’ve never had any negative issues with any of them.”

As it relates to students’ relationships with their White female teachers the responses were vastly different. Highlighted next are several responses from student respondents detailing their relationship with their White female teachers. Student L stated, “I didn’t build a relationship with them.” Student C stated, “I had a few issues

with several of my White female teachers. I felt that they were often condescending towards Black students, specifically Black male students.” Student E stated:

My White female teachers often made me feel bad about myself as a Black student because of our cultural differences. I could always feel what I perceived as animosity towards me when I asked questions in class. The same tension was not presented at White students in our class or even Black female students. Being as vocal as I am I never shied away from telling them how I felt and things would often get better.

Student A stated:

My White female teachers certainly possessed what is known modern day as a “Karen” mindset. Very argumentative, never wrong, sensitive upon correction, snarky, and ultimately in love with my Blackness upon coming to the realization that it was never a threat.

Theme 4: Black Male Students and White Teachers Can Develop Positive Student–Teacher Relationships

Students were given the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and relationships with their White teachers. As it pertains to the overall impact White teachers have had on students, responses were overwhelmingly positive. Ninety one percent of respondents cited that the impact of their White teachers was positive. Student B provided great depth in his response in reflecting on the impact of his White teachers. He stated the following:

I had three really positive experiences with White teachers. My bio teacher, I had from 9–11 grade. Therefore, it was really cool to work with him throughout the

majority of my high school career. As a senior, he often spoke about the growth he witnessed from freshman year, to graduation day. Furthermore, my junior year history teacher was very instrumental. Her teaching abilities made me gain a greater appreciation for history. She was also very approachable, and gave great advice for college, as a recent college graduate herself. And lastly, one of my math teachers not only served as a teacher, but also a coach, and club mentor. He provided excellent life skills.

Student H reflected on how White teachers support Black students by stating the following:

Most of my White teachers publicly supported me in the things that I did at school and in the community. Our White teachers show that they understand what we go through as Black students and help us get to the next level.

When asked about their overall views of their White teachers, 91% of students responded positively and suggested they were understanding. Pertaining to the impact that White teachers had on student learning respondents B, C, E, and L suggested their White teachers supported them in postsecondary planning, helped them find success in Advanced Placement and college entrance exams, and helped them remove cultural barriers between minority students and majority teachers.

Summary

This chapter explored the findings of the research questions:

1. How does a high school mentoring program impact the academic achievement and perception of school for Black male students?

2. How does a high school mentoring program impact postsecondary planning for Black male participants?
3. What perceptions do Black male students have of their White teachers?

This study was conducted using the phenomenology research design method. The researcher collected data through the use of participant surveys, parent and guardian surveys, and faculty and staff surveys. Responses from the surveys and notes from the observations were used to uncover themes that were central to the research study. The qualitative findings are indicated in Figure 4.6.

High school mentoring programs impact the academic achievement and perception of school for Black males through:

Fostering Personal Growth and Network Potential

Building Brotherhood and Postive Representation of Current Participants

Adding Value for Males with or without Fathers in the Home

Providing an Emotional Safe Place

Enhancing Academic Achievement

Offering Community Service Opportunities

Making Public School Essential

Establishing Leadership Potential

Promoting Academic Agency

Developing Students Holistically

Helping Students Find Purpose

Promoting Behavior, Leadership, Involvement, Scholarship, and Service

Promoting Congruent Classroom Participation and Behavior

Creating Opportunities for Student Engagement

We Make a Life by What We Give: The Impact of a High School Mentoring Program on the Perceptions and Academic Achievement of Black Males

FINDINGS

High school mentoring programs impact post-secondary planning for Black male participants through:

Establishing a Culture of Post-Secondary Readiness and Success

Heightening Students Sense of Self-Efficacy and Leadership Capabilities

Building Leadership Capacity and Well-Rounded Students

Promoting High Academic Standards and Post-Secondary Success

Black males have the following perceptions of their White teachers:

Limited Prioritization of Learning Outcomes for Black Male Students

Lack of Cultural Competence

Relationships with White Teachers Vary by Gender (supported by White males and fractured with White females)

Black Male Students and White Teachers Can Develop Positive Student/Teacher Relationships

Figure 4.6 Findings

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Black male students continue to be one of the more academically and socially marginalized students in U.S. schools (Anderson, 2008; Noguera, 2008). The outcomes in school in many ways mirror their condition in the larger society (Polite & Davis, 1999). All of the schools that the researcher have worked in over the past decade have supported the research that was conducted. For educators who are devoted to addressing equity as it pertains to the opportunity gap, there has been growing frustration at the gaps that exist between White students and students of color (e.g., Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Latinos, Indians). These gaps largely impact how Black male students and other minorities perceive schooling. Additionally, understanding the impact of Black male students' perceptions of their White teachers are equally as important to understanding how they perceive their schooling and learning experiences. According to Howard (2013), "The importance of teachers and teaching for Black male students offers important insights; equally as notable are the ways that these young men make meaning of their schooling experience" (p. 73). Howard added that cultural knowledge of Black male epistemologies and knowledge can lead to new theoretical approaches for Black male students and subsequently improve their schooling experiences and outcomes.

Gordon et al. (2009) focused on building interventions that understand the factors that prevent Black students from excelling in the academic environment. This study used the intervention of mentoring to evaluate the impact levied on academic achievement,

perception of school, and perception of their White teachers. Mentoring is impactful and helps students find success as it binds them to the learning environment, which impacts their academic focus, supports their character development, and pushes them toward their postsecondary goals. Although previous researchers such as Gordon et al. (2009) and Freeman (1999) have studied the effects of mentoring on students in postsecondary school, this study focused on students in a high school setting and further examined how mentoring impacts their academic achievement and postsecondary planning, while unearthing how those students perceived school and their White teachers.

As mentioned previously, the purpose of this study was to assess how effective a high school mentoring program is in shaping the academic achievement and postsecondary planning for Black male students, while understanding how Black male students perceived school and their White teachers. The mentoring program gave the participants extra support that Black male students often need to be successful in high school. This study took place at a local high school in Columbia, South Carolina with a population of 1,652 students where 75% of the students are Black and 51% of the students are males.

Methodology

This phenomenological action research study examined the impact that a high school mentoring program had on academic achievement and postsecondary planning for Black male participants. Through the study, the researcher also sought to examine the perceptions Black male participants have of their White teachers and their overall perception of school. Hodgkinson's (1957) stated:

The procedure, however, known as “action research” does have so much to commend it that one might well hope to see a time when school staff members would spend a part of each school day in that kind of activity as a regularly scheduled phase of school work. (p. 137)

It is important for educators to conduct action research as compared to traditional research as it has a direct and immediate impact for practicing educators. By integrating learning by doing with deep reflection, action research has always held the promise of an embedded learning process that can simultaneously inform and create change (Burns, 2007). Action research affords educators the opportunity to operate in their professional capacity, while simultaneously conduct research that often yields major implications for teaching and learning—the core purpose of the public education system. Action research allows a researcher to become one with the research where they are deeply embedded in the research study. Because of the proximity that the researcher had to the study it provided an opportunity for deep learning, connection, and reflection.

Participants were referred to the schools mentoring program for various reasons including improving grades, social skills, and behavior. Many of the students who were referred to the mentoring program had an apprehension to school. Black teachers make up less than 40% of the school’s faculty, while White teachers make up nearly 60%. Because of this, it is important to examine how Black students perceive their White teachers as that may serve as a barrier for participants and impact how they perceive school. Of the 96 teachers that were a part of the school’s faculty, 56 were White making up 58% of the school’s teacher workforce. This is, however, much lower than the

national average of 79.3% (Will, 2020). Seventy seven percent of the school's total student population was Black.

The intervention for this research study was the mentoring program. The Movement Mentoring Program focuses on the pillars that participants commonly refer to as BLISS. BLISS serves as an acronym for behavior, leadership, involvement, scholarship, and service. Eight of 40 students in this program who were selected at random and four graduates of the program who were also selected randomly as participants in the research study. Students in the mentoring program participated in biweekly group mentoring meetings that focused on the areas of behavior, leadership, involvement, scholarship, and service. Participants also met one-on-one to check-in for the purpose of progress monitoring to discuss individual issues and concerns. They also participated in at least one community service initiative planned by members of The Movement.

Participants in the study received the survey to address the research questions. Parents of all participants also received the survey to address the research questions. Faculty/staff of all survey participants received the survey to address the research questions. Community members who were familiar with the students and The Movement mentoring program received the survey to address the research questions. After evaluating the survey results, the researcher coded themes that emerged in the areas of: general impact of mentoring, academic impact of mentoring, postsecondary impact of mentoring, perception of school, and perception of White teachers. Common themes from each category were then identified.

Findings

In an effort to address this studies research questions the researcher evaluated the qualitative data from the survey from research participants, parents and guardians, and faculty and staff to uncover themes that emerged within the study.

General Impact of Mentoring

The data revealed that students who were participants in The Movement mentoring program possessed leadership skills that their peers did not necessarily possess. Participants in The Movement also had a significant potential for growth. Participants in The Movement developed a brotherhood, which formed trust and accountability among their peers who participated in The Movement. Students in The Movement were also able to develop congruent character traits while providing service and advocacy to their school communities. Students in The Movement were seen as well rounded and responsible, while balancing a double consciousness in the social systems that they live.

Academic Impact of Mentoring

The data suggested that students in The Movement were positively impacted in the area of academic achievement. Students in The Movement mentoring program were highly focused and had high academic standards. They also possessed an incomparable work ethic as compared to their peers. Participants in The Movement had greater access to academic opportunities, additional supports, and heightened accountability to ensure they experienced academic success. Furthermore, participants in The Movement projected positive behavior and understood their purpose as students who are

academically focused. All participants in The Movement had grades of As and Bs after the intervention of mentoring was enacted.

Postsecondary Impact of Mentoring

Participants in The Movement experienced success in achieving their initial postsecondary goals. All participants were enrolled in a 4-year university. One also was employed full time. Similar to the other categories participants in The Movement were more focused than their peers. They possessed an unmatched leadership potential and they were purpose driven as it pertained to pursuing their postsecondary goals.

Perception of School

Relating to participants perceptions of school. Students had positive and negative experiences but they identified school as a place that they could grow and develop, while becoming leaders and exhibiting high character. Participants in The Movement identified real world experiences as a benefit to their once-in-a-lifetime high school experience. Participants in The Movement were more self-aware, which contributed to their perception of school, and they stated that myself and mentor in this study had a key role in how they perceived their experiences in school.

Perception of White Teachers

In identifying their perception of their White teachers to address the impact that has on Black male students, participants shared they had positive relationships with their White male teachers and cited cultural differences within their relationships with their White female teachers. Participants did see their teachers as supportive and understanding although they identified Black male learning outcomes as an area that needed to be prioritized among their White teachers. Participants in The Movement described their

self-awareness as a tool that aided them in further discovering how they perceived their White teachers.

Common Themes

The data suggested some common themes that appeared across multiple categories and intersect Black male students' academic achievement, postsecondary planning, perception of school, and perception of their White teachers. These intersecting themes are included in Figure 5.1.

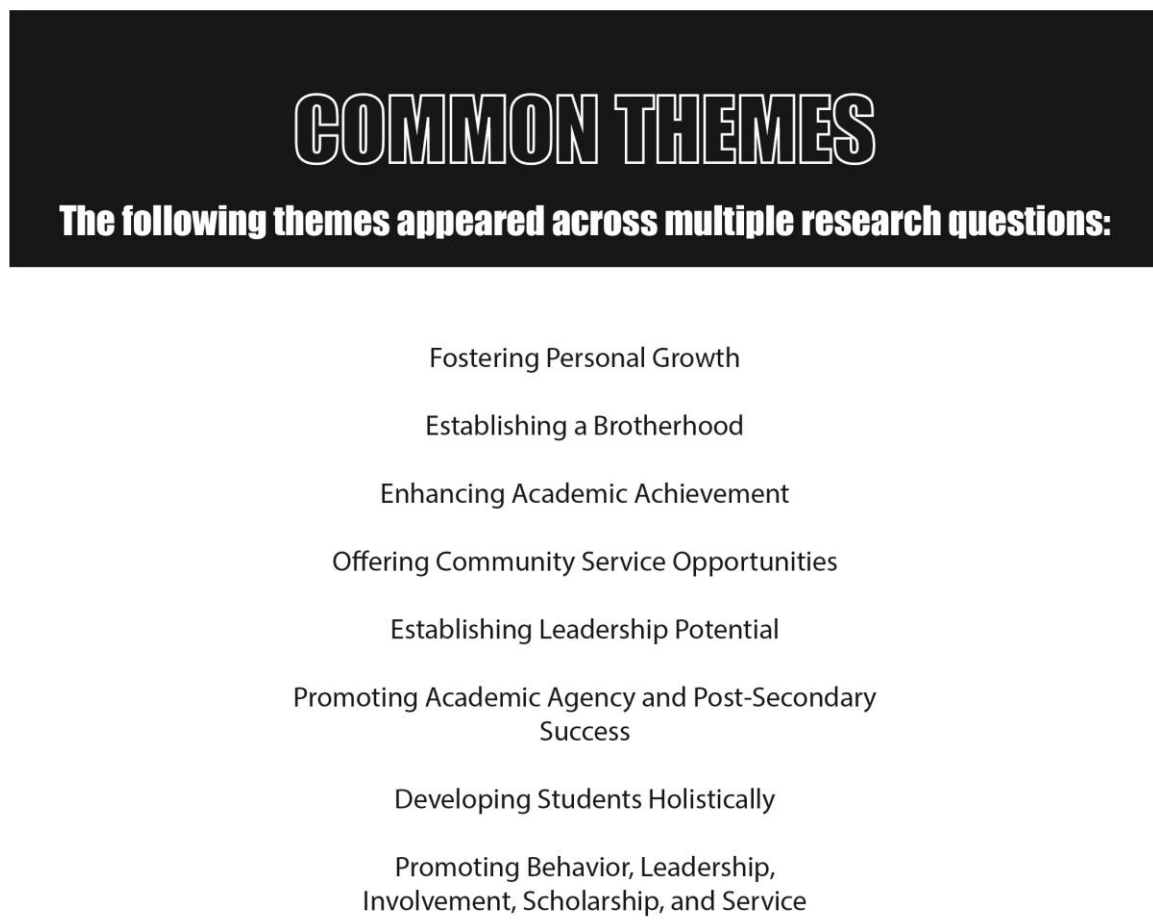


Figure 5.1 Common Themes

Mentoring is helping more of our young people stay on track. Providing the support students need to think more broadly about their future. Building on what works—when it works, in those critical life-changing moments (The White House, 2014).

Action Researcher as a Curriculum Leader

The research is still presently employed as an assistant principal at the high school where the study took place in the South Carolina School District. As an assistant principal, his roles included oversight of the school's freshmen academy, science department, physical education department, JROTC department, student activities, athletics, and the school safety program.

With the needs of students varying at an exorbitant level, the researcher spends most days supporting teachers and students within the freshmen academy. The school's freshmen academy program is designed to help freshmen students transition to and through high school. The last 2 school years, being rattled by the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic, has had a major impact on school operations and student outcomes. The researcher played a key role in helping freshmen teachers address the ongoing academic deficits of freshmen students through nonevaluative feedback, ongoing coaching, and professional development.

The researcher has fulfilled his role within the science, physical education, and JROTC departments by extending support and reviewing data that evidences student learning needs that have a direct impact teachers and students. Specifically addressing his impact on the science department, the researcher helped conduct benchmark testing weekly to address mastery of the standards across core content areas. The researcher

reviewed the data weekly with the department so that they understood student deficits and areas of mastery.

The researcher was identified as South Carolina's Assistant Principal of the Year and named an Emerging Leader by South Carolina's Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Both of these honors indicated that the researcher is a leading curriculum leader across the state of South Carolina. The researcher also extended professional development opportunities for his school, district, state, and nationally.

The researcher currently chairs an initiative within the South Carolina School District to recruit, retain, and develop male teachers of color through mentoring, ongoing support, and professional development. The researcher is pursuing an opportunity to become a principal where the researcher can have even more of an impact on curriculum development within the school, community, district, state, and nationally. The researcher is also pursuing opportunities to train aspiring school administrators in the area of curriculum leadership.

Action Plan

The results of the research highlighted the impact mentoring has on students' academic achievement, postsecondary planning, perception of school, and perception of their White teachers. The themes that emerged can be used as targeted focus areas for Black male students in schools. While in the role of the assistant principalship, the researcher intends to continue to use this model to support students of color. The researcher will branch out and further this research by training and developing additional male mentors that can support this work upon a promotion to principal in the South Carolina School District or a neighboring school district. The researcher will share this

research with schools, districts, and professionals who are committed to the impact of mentoring on Black male students so this work can be initiated within their schools, communities, and districts. The mentor who has already advocated for the urgency of this work will continue to advocate on a local and national level through continuing to present on this all-important work at the state and national level. Black male students continue to be victim to low performance standards, disengagement in school, school and community violence, and other factors that impact their engagement with school. Mentoring is necessary in extending the support that all Black male students need to produce high quality outcomes in school academically and socially. The researcher is also producing a manuscript with another school administrator to help schools and districts formulate sustainable mentoring programs.

Social Justice

Social justice education focuses on the ways in which social groups interact within systems of domination and subordination to privilege or disadvantage members of different social groups (Adams & Zuniga, 2018). According to Clark (2006):

The concept of social justice is central to theorizing about education and schooling, for it points to something important in society which ought to be taken into account by politicians, policy-makers and practitioners in their thinking about the nature of education and what schools are for. (p. 272)

This research study addressed inequities within the opportunity gap between Black male students and their peers. Furthermore, through this study, the researcher explored cultural differences between Black male students and their White teachers

through Black male perception, which was significant between Black male students and White female teachers specifically.

The goal of social justice is full and equitable participation of people from all social identity groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs (Bell, 2018). This study focused on the experiences of Black male students and identified themes that promoted their success in high school, thus aligning with the overall goal of social justice education.

Recommendations for Practice, Limitations, and Implications for Future Research

The results of this qualitative study suggested that mentoring is a supportive intervention that aids students in their pursuit of academic and postsecondary success. It also suggested that Black male students in high school mentoring programs operate optimally in high school. The study highlighted students in mentoring programs having a positive perception of school. Black male students in high school mentoring programs see a number of their White teachers as understanding and supportive, and report positive relationships with their White male teachers and fractured relationships with their White female teachers. The researcher would recommend schools with high minority male populations use this study to coordinate and organize their mentoring framework.

Due to the limitations of this research, it is necessary for this study to be studied with even greater depth, which offers implications for future research. This study is limited to eight out of 40 current participants and four alumni participants for a total of 12 participants. Participants underwent an 8-week intervention through The Movement Mentoring Program. Because of the sample size and time frame results cannot be

generalized. The researcher's recommendations for future researchers would be to conduct the study with the entire population of participants and over a longer time period.

Because the researcher was the mentor, that could also serve as a limitation. Due to the relationships created within the school, survey participants could have responded in a way that was perceived to be aligned with the researcher's beliefs and not authentically and transparently even though survey participants were encouraged to be truthful in their responses. Additionally, the instrument that was used to survey participants and all other groups was created by the researcher which could cause additional bias. The researcher validated the study through his professional lens as a former professional school counselor, a trained mentor, and school administrator. The researcher's role in these capacities, background as a mentoring coordinator, and subsequent training in each of these roles justifies his ability to create a survey that effectively evaluates mentoring programs. The researcher also validated the study through allowing other qualified researchers to peer-review the instrument. However, due to the researcher's role in the study there is still potential for bias to have impacted the formulation of the instrument used to survey participants and other subgroups. It is the researcher's recommendation, that when possible, to use a validated instrument or use a third party to create a validated instrument to survey participants when the researcher is an active participant in the study.

Although the research added to the depth of previous studies there is still more to be explored. This study focused on Black male students specifically. Other subgroups could benefit from this similar study as mentoring programs are not just exclusive to Black male students. Lastly, students who were randomly selected already had above average grades so it was difficult to address improvement. It would be beneficial to see

the results for students who had less than average grades prior to entering The Movement.

Summary

This action research study explored the inequities within the opportunity gap between Black male students and their peers through addressing how mentoring plays a role on Black male students' academic achievement and postsecondary planning. Furthermore, the study explored cultural differences between Black male students and their White teachers through perception. Lastly, the study aimed to identify how Black male students perceive school.

The results of this study suggested that mentoring is a necessary intervention that aids students in their pursuit of academic and postsecondary success. Furthermore, it highlighted that Black male students in high school mentoring programs project high academic standards and an intent academic focus. The study emphasized how students in mentoring programs possess a positive perception of school. Black male students in high school mentoring programs saw their White teachers, overall, as understanding and supportive, and reported constructive relationships with their White male teachers and ruptured relationships with their White female teachers. The researcher will extend opportunities for professional development for schools and districts that are interested in the using the intervention of mentoring to support students of color.

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