

THE EFFECTS OF MENTORING ON STUDENT OUTCOMES

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ABSTRACT

Historically, African Americans males have scored significantly lower than other subgroups on standardized assessments and in academic grades. In addition, African American males have also acquired more disciplinary infractions than all other subgroups. In general, statistics show that adolescent boys have lower achievement and more deviant behaviors than all other subgroups. Boys often struggle with the lack of motivation to excel in school and display appropriate character. This study compared the academic achievement and discipline of a group of boys participating in a mentoring group to a control group with no mentor over a four-month period. Resulting data was analyzed in three one-way ANOVAs to determine if there was a significant difference in outcomes between the mentor group and the group without a mentor. The study also sought to determine if the race of the mentor (same race vs cross race) had a significant difference in outcomes within the mentoring group. Findings of this study suggest that African American boys excel in academics and in behavior when mentored by an adult male figure. The race of the mentor yielded no significant difference in outcomes.

Keywords: Academics, Discipline, Same-race mentor, Cross-race mentor

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List of Abbreviations

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Degrees of Freedom (df)

F Statistic (F)

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Mean (M)

Mean Square (MS)

P-Value (p)

Standard Deviation (SD)

Standards of Learning (SOL)

Sum of the Squares (SS)

Turkey's Honestly Significant Difference (Turkey HSD)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Adolescence is a difficult period of development for youth. Issues with academics, behavior, and social skills are common to this age group as they search for their identities. Many of the challenges facing young people are partially related to the lack of strong, healthy, and stable relationships (Spencer, Collins, Ward, & Smashmaya, 2010). Youth often find these relationships in peer interactions as they rebel against adult models. Opposition to parental guidance leaves youth vulnerable to the opinions of their peers and inappropriate responses to various situations. Adult mentors are needed for healthy adolescent development. Particularly for adolescent boys, positive male mentors are needed to motivate them to excel academically, promote appropriate behaviors, and acquire life skills needed to become prominent men.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not mentoring had a positive effect on adolescent boys in the areas of academics and in school discipline. This study also sought to determine if a same-race mentor versus a cross-race mentor had any significant effect on students' grades and behavior. The next section will discuss the history of mentoring as it will be utilized to determine the need for mentoring adolescent boys.

Background

Mentors are experienced individuals who support, guide, and encourage their less experienced mentees (Wittrup, Hussain, Albright, Hurd, Varner, & Mattis, 2019). Through shared activities, guidance, information, and encouragement, mentees gain in character and competence and begin setting positive life goals (Gordon, Downey, & Bangert, 2013). The relationships established between mentor and mentee can have profound effects on the achievement and well-being of students.

Historically, mentoring programs were often based on white, middle-class, male norms (Lindsay-Dennis, Cummings, & McClendon, 2011). Mentoring programs then focused on youth of single parent homes. This was based on the assumption that these youth would benefit from an additional adult role model (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011). Several of these mentors were based out of churches or community organizations who sought to steer youth in the right direction. While these mentorships may have been effective for these subgroups, there came a need to reach a greater population. Due to the increasing concerns about student performance and the schools' efforts to implement interventions that might address students' challenges, school-based mentoring programs evolved (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011). In 2005, it was reported that approximately 870,000 adults were mentoring children in schools (Herrera et al, 2011). Youth benefited significantly in five areas: emotional/psychological, problem/high-risk behavior, social competence, academic/educational, and career/employment (DuBois et al, 2011). In addition, youth participating in mentorships had an increased sense of school belonging and decreased truancy (Curran & Wexler, 2017).

In the United States, African American students face more barriers to achievement than their White counterparts and, on average, display comparably poorer educational outcomes (Wittrup et al, 2019). Barriers may include poverty, single parent living, and absence fathers to name a few. Gaddis (2012) notes that youth must first have access to an adult to be able to benefit from his human capital. Often the lack of resources prevents African American boys from having mentors (Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, 2009) and the loss of active models isolates them from social life (Sykes, Gioviano, & Piquero, 2014). As a result, African American boys seek peers as their models which often presents a negative conception of their ambition and behavior.

In his theory of psychosocial development, Erik Erikson explains that adolescents experience a period of identity and role confusion (Rageliene, 2016). During this period of development, adolescents commonly search for models within their peer interactions as opposed to complying with the expectations of parents. Non-parental models are needed to guide youth in a direction that their peers cannot adequately model. John Bowlby's attachment theory adds to this logic by arguing that attachments persist for the lifespan (Levy, 2013). Healthy and trusting relationships with positive models will further encourage adolescent boys to display appropriate behaviors. Once trust is established, adolescent boys will go to lengths to meet the expectations of their models.

Lev Vygotsky's zone of proximal development expands upon what adolescents can do independently and what can be done with an adult guide. Since adolescents strive to be autonomous of adults, their efforts to be independent can often be harmful. Knowledgeable adults are needed to assist youth with making healthy decisions (Eun, 2019). Mentors are also needed to help adolescents shape the image that they would like to identify with. Charles Cooley refers to this as the looking glass self (Madianou, 2012). Often adolescent boys form their perceptions of a man based on what they see on television and other forms of media. The lack of visible male models causes them to form false concepts of a man's value. These misconceptions are often detrimental to youth development and deprives adolescent boys of the motivation needed to excel in school. Abraham Maslow's motivational theory expands upon youth motivation by identifying a hierarchy of needs. Beyond the basic needs of essentials for nutrition and safety, adolescents need a belongingness and esteem to function properly (Taormina & Gao, 2013). Without these needs, adolescent boys are vulnerable to deviant behaviors and lower

academic motivation. Where statistics posit that boys are lower achieving, this study argues that boys are less motivated.

The “boys will be boys” assumption reflects a superficial assessment of boys’ lives holding that their behaviors are normal for their age and gender (O’Neil & Lujan, 2009). It suggests that boys naturally have aggressive and disobedient behaviors. This theory does not consider the turmoil and trouble that maybe underneath the defensive masks of adolescent boys. Instead of finding the root of the issues, this theory accepts the notion that boys are inferior. Particularly for African American boys, adverse childhood experiences (ACES) may prevent proper development and socialization. Environmental hazards such as poverty, violence, abuse, and drug exposure could severely cripple the concepts of healthy maturation. Poor role modeling and poor social support networks may leave boys vulnerable to social conditions such as peer influence and mental health (Kelley & Lee, 2018). With no alternatives, African American boys often conform to their environment that may be infested with delinquency, drugs, and violence. Even in prominent environments, African American boys typically lack motivation as compared to other racial/ethnic groups.

Problem Statement

Gordon, Downey, and Bangert (2013) conducted a study on school-based mentoring programs to find that participating students have significantly fewer disciplinary referrals, fewer absences, and greater connections with peers and adults. Additional studies show that mentoring yields improvements in academics (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011). Even these improvements are short term and have smaller effects over time (Spencer, Collins, Ward, & Smashmaya, 2010). Limited research has reviewed the intrinsic motivation of boys and how this motivation can be used in a mentoring relationship. A recent study by Gopalan (2019) reports

that African American boys account for 25% of all students who received an out of school suspensions as compared to other racial/ethnic groups. Academically, the Black-white achievement gap has been noted to emerge as early as kindergarten and persist into high school and college (Gopalan, 2019). This achievement gap shows that African American boys are often among the lower performing of all subgroups. Socially, African American boys have a higher probability of displaying inappropriate interactions that may result in criminal behavior. They are more vulnerable to peer influences and often lack the leadership skills and self-esteem to make healthy decisions. Considering these issues, previous literature lacks knowledge of how mentorships can assist African American boys in defying these statistics. This research argues that mentorships can motivate boys to achieve academically and exhibit positive behaviors.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to show that mentoring can be used to motivate boys to excel in school. This motivation will lead to gains in academics and in positive behaviors. Data was collected for middle school boys who are participants in the Male Call mentoring program. Consisting of 30 members, Male Call participants were divided into six groups, each led by an adult mentor. Five boys were paired with an adult mentor. Four groups were led by African American males, while a Caucasian and Hispanic male lead the other two groups. Participants engaged in team-building activities, character workshops, community service, and field studies that promote college/career readiness. Students' grades and discipline were monitored by their mentor and points were awarded for improvements. Group participants made efforts to acquire points for good grades and positive behaviors. In addition, members who received a disciplinary infraction or had a failing grade were not able to participate in monthly field studies. Group members encouraged each other to perform in the classroom and display appropriate behaviors.

Put downs were not allowed as mentors stressed that the goal was for all members to excel. The mentors' role was to encourage his group members to perform academically and to display positive behaviors. The independent variable in this study was male mentoring and the dependent variables were academic grades and school discipline. Data acquired from the mentoring program was compared to a random set of boys who had not been assigned to a male mentor.

Significance of the Study

Studies of school engagement and achievement have documented issues for African Americans and Hispanics during middle school (Buehler, Fletcher, Johnston, & Weymouth, 2015). These issues stem from various perceptions of the school and the sensitivity given to the needs of the minority populations. With all of the social issues that correlate to middle school, an undesirable school environment could lead to low motivation and learning may become less effective (Yeung, Baker, Tracey, & Mooney, 2013). Boys are often disengaged in learning for lack of interest in the subject being taught. Though great efforts have been made to re-engage girls in learning about math, science and engineering (Carr-Chellman, 2012), boys often struggle in the areas of language. The Black-white achievement gap adds that discrepancies in achievement widen with grade progression (Gopalan, 2019). Given the developmental struggles of adolescence (puberty, independence, identify confusion), African American boys experience a decline in middle school. Mentorships are needed to provide positive models for boys who are vulnerable to the hazards of their environment.

Research Questions(s)

Based on the recent issues concerning the achievement of adolescent boys, the theories on adolescent development, and the motivational level of boys in school, the following questions were addressed in this research:

RQ1: Can male mentors motivate boys to make gains in school academics?

RQ2: Can mentoring encourage boys to behave appropriately in school?

RQ3: Does having a mentor of the same race/ethnicity yield greater outcomes?

The examination of African American boys' academic and behavioral motivation as compared to other subgroups is an important contribution to the effects of mentoring and relationships among adolescent boys.

Definitions

The following terms need special attention to enable the reader to fully comprehend this study:

1. Mentoring - Mentoring is an integrated approach to advising, coaching, and nurturing proteges that enhances individual growth and development (Lindsay-Dennis, Cummings, & McClendon, 2011)
2. School Belonging - School belonging is the perception of students as individuals, respecting their existence, and supporting them in the social environment of the school (Akar-Vural, Yilmaz-Ozelci, Cengel, & Gomleksiz, 2013)
3. Motivation - Motivation is individual energy that stems from a student's desire and willpower to learn, work, and reach their potential (Yeung & Curwood, 2015)

These terms will be utilized throughout this research to show that mentoring has positive effects on the achievement of adolescent boys.

Summary

In summary, there are issues with the achievement of boys in the areas of academics, positive behaviors, and motivation. These issues are particularly apparent for African American boys who may have additional environmental stressors preventing them from learning. Mentoring poses as an intervention to assist boys in making academic gains, improving their discipline and gaining motivation to excel beyond their barriers. Boys lack the motivation needed to excel beyond other subgroups. This study strives to show that male mentoring groups have the ability to assist boys in their pursuit of identity and motivation. This research asked if male mentoring can have positive effects on middle school boys' academics and behavior. It also asks if having a mentor of the same race/ethnic yields greater outcomes. Data collected from this study was used as an extension of the research that has already been conducted on the effects of mentoring.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Lindsay-Dennis, Cummings, & McClendon (2011) defined mentoring as an integrated approach to advising, coaching, and nurturing proteges that enhances individual growth and development. These programs are used by schools and community groups to enhance resiliency. Khan (2013) described mentoring as a powerful emotional interaction between an older and younger person, where the older mentor is trusted and loved. Trust and love are essential for this relationship to be effective considering the lack of these maybe the sole reason for seeking a mentorship. Issues with communication in the home often result in poor relationships between parents and children. The youth then seeks trust and love from another adult. Once these are secured, the rapport established between the mentor and mentee will open the doors to a multitude of benefits. For adolescents, mentoring could help with struggles in the areas of academics, behaviors, and character building. Most often these mentees are minority males who are at a high risk of delinquency (Kelley & Lee, 2018). In many cases, adverse behaviors have root to some form of trauma that resulted in behavioral changes for young boys. This trauma could stem from domestic violence or abuse in the home, environmental hazards such as crime and drugs, or even damaged relationships. This is a very vulnerable time for youth where positive influence is needed to channel adverse emotions into positive action. Since these positive influences are limited in most environments, minority boys are left to create their own picture of a man. In doing so, boys often wear the labels of lower intelligence and a mentality that leads to criminal behaviors. My theory is that the lower achievement of boys is not a result of their lack of ability, but a result of their lack of motivation. Boys need short term goals and positive models in order to be successful. They must be able to see their lives beyond their

current situations and understand that prosperity is in reach, regardless of their background. Mentorships provide this type of guidance to young boys. Studies show that youth with at least one positive and significant mentoring relationship tend to fair better in their transition to adulthood (Spencer et al, 2010). Mentors provide boys with basic life skills in addition to school-based characteristics to be successful. This permits boys to defy the assumption that minority boys are low achieving and to redefine the identity of their gender. Through mentorships, adolescent boys can acquire and refine new thinking skills and the motivation to succeed (DuBois et al, 2011, Bugler, McGeown, & Clair-Thompson, 2013). Though it may be presented in multiple ways, motivation is the key to a boy's success. If boys see the value in their consistent efforts in school, they will make strides in academics and in behavior. This chapter will review the theoretical framework surrounding mentorships, the greater issues adolescent boys face, and how strong mentorships can promote excellent in academics, behavior, and general life skills.

Theoretical Framework

There are several theories that support the effectiveness of mentoring with adolescents. From a developmental perspective, adolescents' issues with academics and behavior are quite common, especially for boys. While not all adolescents face adversity during these years, many do experience problems rooted in their desires to be included into peer groups. For many adolescents, peer acceptance is more important than parental guidance and the expectations set for them. The result is a generation of youth who create their identities based on unsecured models. In this section, we will explore various theories that relate to youth development and how mentoring might assist with maturation. We will use the theories of Erik Erikson, John

Bowlby, Lev Vygotsky, Charles Cooley, and Abraham Maslow to elaborate on the developmental concepts of adolescent growth.

Erik Erikson

Erik Erikson's (1958, 1963) theory of psychosocial development offers an initial position on the need for mentorships. In fifth stage of his psychosocial development theory, Erikson notes that adolescents experience a period of identity versus role confusion where they must attempt to construct their own sense of identity and find a social environment that they belong to (Rageliene, 2016). Erikson described identity as a fundamental principle that develops over the lifespan. It provides a sense of continuity within the self and in interactions with others. Once a child enters adolescence, he begins to compare himself to and associate his own identity with peers. Peer groups have a significant influence on adolescent development as the behaviors of the group become a norm for all participants. A peer group not only provides emotional support for adolescents, but also provides the social status necessary for identity development (Rageliene, 2016). Achieved identity is related to psychological well-being and greater emotional stability. Negative influences, however, could result in delinquent behavior.

During this transition to adulthood, adolescent boys struggle with the expectations that are placed upon them by parents and their environment as well as struggles with their peer interactions. Their desire to become a part of the social circle often results in a lack of academic effort and issues with behavior. Power struggles with parents further contribute to a down spiral of adverse behaviors. Effective mentoring assists adolescents in the development of positive identity. Mentors assist youth in developing their positive selves out of their ideas of what they would like to become and what they fear becoming (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). Fears rooted from childhood trauma can be confronted and dreams can be inspired

through mentorship. False models can be excluded from the influence of adolescent boys through exposures to men you provide, protect and lead their families. Without this guidance, adolescent boys are forced to seek models in their peers who are just as confused as they are. Although this stage of development is a natural part of youth maturation, potential harms can be alleviated by the influence of a positive male model.

John Bowlby

Bowlby's (1973, 1988) attachment theory posits that children seek comfort and protection from caregivers in times of distress. In its conception, the theory holds that early attachments have long-term effects on personality development, interpersonal functioning, and psychopathology (Levy, 2013). Five key tasks are involved with this psychotherapy: establishing a secure base, exploring past attachment experiences, exploring the therapeutic relationship, linking past experiences to present ones, and revisiting working models. Bowlby believed that patients must first experience trust and care to fully explore the contents of their thinking. Reflecting upon past and present relationships assists these clients with acknowledging their feelings, expectations and behaviors so that the therapist may assist with the maintenance of future relationships. The therapist may utilize these experiences to make the patient aware of how their past is related to their present. New ways of thinking, feeling, and acting may then be established after modifying adverse actions from past relationships. Attachments, however, do not end with the caregiver, but persist for the lifespan (Levy, 2013). Attachments can be experienced from the womb to the tomb as people are always developing either positively or negatively.

As children go through their adolescent stages of development, they seek the guidance of a non-parental figures as their desire for autonomy increases. Stuck in a gap between childhood

and adulthood, adolescents seek to function without parental guidance, but do not have the resources to function alone. Adult attachments are more secure than peer attachments as peers are not equipped with the life experiences to assist their friends in times of distress. Mentors who present themselves as dependable and supportive models, provide adolescents with the security that is needed. Even if not licensed therapists, mentors can promote relationship building that allows adolescents to speak on past experiences and fears that might have an adverse effect on their current functioning. For young boys, who have a male mentor, the relationship might allow them to relate to another male who shows empathy for their past experiences. The benefits of these attachments promote productive exploration of the environment that leads to the development of knowledge, skills and competence (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). In the absence of a father figure, these attachments allow boys to become men through a process of modeling and conflict resolution. Even when a male is present in the home, boys may need additional models to curtail their gender stereotypes.

Lev Vygotsky

Another theory that supports mentoring relationships is Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development. Learning takes place in the range between what an adolescent can learn independently and what he can learning with adult guidance. Due to the limitations of their age, adolescents are not fully capable of making consistent good decisions. Often, they seek the assistance of their peers which further cripples their development. Many of these youth are reluctant to seek adult guidance as previous experiences with adults have not been beneficial. Many adolescents shy away from adult interactions as they feel that their thoughts and concerns will not be heard. In other situations, authoritarian parents insist on telling their children what to do as opposed to listening to their thoughts and feelings. This type of communication does not

support a healthy relationship between the parent and child. It only promotes damaged relationships and causes youth to withdraw from social interactions.

Eun (2019) posits that formal instruction must be acquired through the mediation of a more knowledgeable person. In theory, people only develop by levels and cannot extend beyond the next steps. When forced to advance to stages of development that they are not developmentally prepared for, youth may regress. For adolescents, this regression may be viewed as a lack of effort in school and a withdrawal from peers. Mentoring provides adolescents with caring adults who are willing to nurture their ideas (Rhodes, et al, 2006). While providing motivation to think beyond their perceived limitations, mentorships allow adolescents to fully exercise their creative minds. The association with a positive adult figure, enables adolescents to extend their thinking beyond their peer limitations. This will not only serve as a motivator to excel academically in school, but also increase their awareness environmental risks and benefits. These benefits are often difficult to acquire through parental guidance and the dynamics of the parent to child relationship often prevents the extension of knowledge. Parents spend more time managing behaviors and maintaining order as opposed to assisting children with exploration. Mentoring promotes the extension of a child's zone of development while providing a safety net of adult guidance.

Charles Cooley

Charles Cooley (1902) described the looking glass self where youth view significant people in their lives as social mirrors. Through these mirrors, youth form opinions of themselves and use this knowledge to develop their sense of self. Cooley identified three elements of the looking glass: imagination of our appearance to other person, imagination of the other person's judgement of our appearance, and the self-feeling that ensues (Madianou, 2012). Through the

vulnerability of adolescent development, youth engage in a power struggle between the view they have for themselves and the regard of others. The goal of perfection is met with many imperfections which causes youth to feel unworthy. When their self-identity does not match their peer perceptions of them, youth begin to feel shame. The image viewed in the mirror becomes a monument of dislike that adolescents run from. As a recourse, they seek the identity of others who have a more favorable appearance.

As adolescent boys struggle to develop their identity, positive models are necessary to promote positive men. Negative models will cause the mirrored reflections of young men to be flawed resulting in poor decision making and negative perceptions of the gender. Mentors can help change the perception that adolescent boys are inadequate and unintelligent. Mentors will assist youth in developing a self-image that will not only build the child's esteem but also influence positive interactions in their peer environments.

Abraham Maslow

Abraham Maslow's (1943) motivational theory identifies five needs of motivational hierarchy: physiological needs, safety-security needs, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization (Taormina & Gao, 2013). These needs are each required by all humans for the continuation of their lives or for their well-being. Physiological needs, the first level of the hierarchy, refers to primitive needs or those that are defined by semantic relationships. Examples of these needs can be food, water, and good health. Extended absence of these things could result in psychological stress or even death. The next level of motivation involves a person's need for safety and security. Much like animals, humans have an instinct that alerts them in times of danger. When alarmed, the body will respond accordingly, but avoidance is always the best reaction. For children, this level of security is often provided by parents who

make sure that basic needs are met. For adults, safety and security may be in the form of a home to live in or a stable job that provides a means of family survival. The third level of motivation is belongingness, which explains a multitude of the issues that adolescents have. Humans have a natural hunger for affective relationships with people (Taormina & Gao, 2013). Attempts are often made by adolescents to find these social circles at all costs, even if it results in a reduction of educational efforts. When these needs are not met, the individual may experience anxiety, loneliness, isolation, social rejection, and depression. Belongingness is a major motivator for adolescents who may be experiencing other relational issues at home and with peers.

The fourth level of motivation is the esteem people have for themselves and respect received from others. This level is especially challenging for adolescents who are experiencing a multitude of developmental changes. Teens who are physically underdeveloped may experience low esteem as they idolize their peers have already reached their mark in puberty. Teens who over overdeveloped may have similar problems as they may receive unwanted attention for their physique. Beyond the physical, social interactions can also affect self-esteem. Adolescents who are considered popular often experience higher esteem than those who are more socially withdrawn. Athletes and teens from a higher socioeconomic status are normally viewed with higher esteem while the studious child is shunned down upon. These perceptions can have both positive and negative effects on a child's school performance. Students with higher esteem typically perform better academically and often have better discipline in school.

Self-actualization is the fifth level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which occurs at some stage of adulthood. This is when a person has reached their own desire of self-fulfillment. Self-actualization might be accomplished by having a family that is financially secure, occupying a great job, or even having the material possessions that they have always wanted. This level of

motivation is but a dream for adolescents, though it provides goals for the future. These are goals that are discussed as they matriculate through school and acquire the tools needed to accomplish them.

Related Literature

Mentoring Effects

Kent, Kochan, & Green (2013) found that formal mentoring programs were initiated to aid those who because of their gender, ethnicity, or class had limited opportunities to advance in the workplace. The general nature of the mentor and mentee relationship was to help adults advance through some type of adversity. While adults do often need this type of guidance, adolescents are often more vulnerable to peer influences and could benefit from a strong mentor relationship. Natural mentors such as close relatives and family friends are most common to adolescents (Syed, Goza, Chemers, & Zurbriggen, 2012), though school-based mentoring programs reach a unique population of children (Coller & Kuo, 2014). These are children who, while attempting to achieve an education, are steered in a negative direction for some reason. These are the children who may obtain lower grades, have multiple disciplinary problems, or even be socially isolated from other youths. Mentoring programs aim to provide these children with a caring adult to assist in their developmental challenges and the adversity of their environment (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011). The mentor becomes a second parent in the sense that they provide youth with valuable skills to aid their success in school and in life. Edds-Ellis & Keaster (2013) described a mentor as a transfer agent to the protege by providing a mechanism for understanding. Lindsay-Dennis, Cummings, & McClendon (2011) described a good mentor as someone who guides another person to success. Good mentors help youth explore their doubts and fears while providing them some security to develop new ideas

and take some positive risks (Kao, Rogers, Spitzmueller, Lin, & Lin, 2014). This is not to say that the relationship won't incur some bumps and bruises as adolescence is a time of discovery and children will make mistakes. Mentors meet these mistakes with open arms and direction. They aim to promote the mentee's potential by providing them with trust, companionship and empathy (Simoes & Alarcao, 2014). As an experienced adult, the commitment to time and specific efforts provided by the mentor are most often beneficial to youth who often lack these nurturing relationships (Moodie & Fisher, 2009). Relationships and positive influences are key factors of development that youth need and seek during their adolescence. Consistent with Cooley's (1902) theory of the looking-glass self, mentors act as social mirrors by which youth look to form views of themselves. The words and opinion of mentors that are reflected onto youth become integrated into their own identities and their sense of self (Hurd, Sanchez, Zimmerman, & Caldwell, 2012). A positive view often yields a positive reflection and healthy maturation for adolescents. Seeing and interacting with successful adults enables youth to envision themselves in similar roles and further strengthens their identities (Syed et al, 2012). These positive influences are then utilized when faced with adverse situations. Positive decision making is influenced by mentors as they encourage youth to view negative experiences as opportunities for growth and learning (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011). In addition, this model of effective adult communication helps youth to understand, express, and regulate their emotions. Coller & Kuo (2014) add the mentorships promote increased self-concept, trust, goal setting, conflict resolution skills, and appropriate responses to peers. These are the very tools that are necessary for youth to transcend through adolescence and through school. Academic success, healthy behavior, and future aspirations are all motivators for a good mentoring relationship.

Duration of mentorship

The characteristics of each mentoring relationship may be different as children are very different (Park, Liao, & Crosby, 2017). For these reasons, it is imperative that mentors invest time with their mentees. Mentoring relationships which are sustained over a significant period of time most often lead to greater outcomes (Moodie & Fisher, 2009). In a school setting, this time can be acquired by participating in school activities, extended community events, or by having meaningful discussions with the mentee. Consistency is important. In the absence of consistency, adolescents doubt the sincerity of the relationship. Gaddis (2012) notes that both the amount of time spent in a relationship and the level of trust have positive effects on youth. In order for any relationship to flourish, trust must be established which involves an investment of time. Since children are different, the length of time needed to establish trust may vary. For some youth, trust may be acquired immediately while others who may have faced some form of trauma may be a little reluctant to trust. A strong and trusting connection must be forged between the mentor and the mentee before any real progress can be made. Regular contact creates opportunities for the mentor to become involved in the youth's life and to offer assistance in areas of interest and emotional support (Spencer et al., 2010). This support is valuable to youth who struggle with decision making during adolescence.

Adolescence

Early information-processing models and personality theorists depicted individuals as naive scientists who search for truth by gathering and organizing data from their environment (Butler-Barnes, Estrada-Martinez, Colin, & Jones, 2015). Since environments are subject to both positive and negative influences, the data received from exploration yield both positive and negative outcomes. This is especially relevant to adolescents as they are heavily influenced by

the external environment as they seek to build their sense of identity through group membership (Curran & Wexler, 2017). According to Erikson (1968), during adolescence youth develop their identity by determining who they are, how they fit into society, and who they will become in the future (Lindsay-Dennis, Cummings, & McClendon, 2011). Identity is achieved through a process of crisis and commitment (Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, & Boyd, 2009). Crisis occurs when adolescents are faced with multiple alternatives to which identity fits into the schema. They may choose to commit to an identity that may benefit their maturation or one that may cause their development to be stressful. Because of these varied alternatives, G. Stanley Hall referred to adolescence as a storm and stress period. For most children, this process begins in middle school and may persist until early adulthood. Since early adolescence is more focused on the importance of maintaining friendships (Jamison, Wilson, & Ryan, 2014), peer influences weigh heavily in adolescents' decision making. In an ideal world, all children would have positive influences, but this is often not the case. Many adolescents live in environments that are influenced by drugs, violence and other environmental hazards. Multiple stressors in the home and in the environment make adolescents susceptible to these very same hazards which can have lasting effects on their adult lives. Many adolescents are trapped in a challenging social space where they want to be seen and treated as an adult, but are still considered children (Jamison, Wilson, & Ryan, 2014). This is often the reality of children of poverty or those who assume adult roles at an early age. These youth are at risk of conforming to their environment and need positive influences in their lives. Spencer, Collins, Ward, & Smashnaya (2010) note that the stable presence of a caring adult aids youth to cope with stress. Since many adolescents often rebel against their parents, children seek this support from adults outside of the home and peers (Wang & Halcombe, 2010). Peer and adult mentors often guide adolescents' thoughts and

decision making. Though peers are often more willing to offer advice to friends, their guidance lacks the maturity to adequately address all situations. Adult mentors who have a genuine interest in youth are most appropriate to provide adolescents with the tools needed for success.

Too Cool for School

When children transition to levels of school they are exposed to new peers to greater or lesser degrees (Andrew & Flashman, 2017). They begin to arrange themselves in cliques and develop a desire to be included in peer activities and to be accepted (Meijis, Cillessen, Scholte, Segers, & Spijkerman, 2010). Recent studies in the field of sociology found that mattering to others and the perception of being relevant are increasingly important for adolescents (Kelley & Lee, 2018). Children who perceive themselves as not relevant and those who are rejected by peers, often struggle with effective social skills (Zach, Yazdi-Ugay, & Zeey, 2016). Jamison, Wilson, & Ryan (2014) add that rejected and unpopular students are at risk of poor developmental outcomes (Jamison, Wilson, & Ryan, 2014), and particularly for boys, overt aggression (Gorman, Schwartz, Nakamoto, & Mayeux, 2011). Since boys often lack self-motivation, their lack of social acceptance and popularity make them vulnerable to mistreatment by higher status peers (Gorman et al, 2011). In addition, they become the targets of retaliation or are socially withdrawn.

Perceived popularity refers to social dominance, influence, and prestige in a peer group. Perceived popular adolescents are viewed as cool, powerful, influential, arrogant, controlling and aggressive (Meijs et al, 2010). This status quo is overly appealing to boys as they feel the need to adopt certain behaviors to avoid being ridiculed, bullied, or ostracized (Irwin, 2013). To gain this popularity, boys hide their academic interests (Meijs et al, 2010) and develop the attitude that it is not cool or masculine to perform well in school. Popularity is prioritized over academic

achievement and following rules in school (Jamison, Wilson, & Ryan). This places adolescent males at risk of behavioral problems, absenteeism, grade retention, health risks and ultimately school dropout (Simoes & Alarcao, 2014; Teunissen, Adelman, Prinstein, Spijkerman, Poelen, Engels, & Scholte, 2011). These multiple factors result in a stereotype that boys perform poor academically.

From early development, girls are able to absorb more sensory information than boys resulting in better hearing (Senn, 2012). This may explain the perception that boys do not pay attention in school where in fact this may be a result of their inability to hear instruction. Considering this, boys consistently earn lower language grades (Heyder, Kessels, & Steinmayr, 2017) and are out-performed by girls in reading at all levels of school (Librick, Wheldall, & Madelaine, 2012). Marsh and Yeung (1998) found that even the traditionally male-dominated field of mathematics shows declines in male performance. The reality of these trends is that more boys perform below their potential than girls (Bugler, McGeown, & Clair-Thompson, 2013). To many boys, academic achievement is a feminine trait and is not considered cool (Legewie & DiPrete, 2012).

According to a report by the Agency of Education in Sweden (2006), boys are more relaxed and have less ambitious attitudes towards school (Johnson, 2014). This is something that begins in the early years of school. Bozack (2011) found that students develop negative attitudes towards reading over their elementary years. Boys often lack confidence in their reading ability (Senn, 2012) and often put forth little effort to the application of reading and reading assessments (Logan & Medford, 2010). Beyond reading, boys typically view school in a negatively. Previous research found that boys see homework as less helpful, are less likely to ask for assistance when needed and are more likely to engage in self-sabotaging behaviors (King &

Ganotice, 2014; Wilcox, McQuay, & Blackstaffe, 2017). These behaviors are shown in their failure to complete homework and study for assessments or even their unwillingness to engage in class discussions. Boys often consider school work to be tedious and need enjoyment in it in order to work hard (Logan & Medford, 2010). Since traditional school often lacks this type of engagement, boys prefer to spend their energy on more compelling activities such as sports, friends, and video games (Tynerv & Petrilli, 2018). These adolescents do not comprehend that the trade-offs that are made between learning and leisure activities (Hofer, Schmid, Fries, Zivkovic, & Dietz, 2009) may affect their economic success, long-term health and well-being as adults (Areepattamannil, 2012).

Boys need mentors to promote academic excellence. Sykes, Gioviano, & Piquero (2014) found that mentored youth are slightly more academically engaged and exhibit higher self-control than those that do not have a mentor. Sanchez, Esparza, and Colo'n (2008) found this to be accurate in Latino adolescents who reported greater academic success as a result of mentoring. Where motivation is already an issue, the continuity of mentoring for boys yields increases in scholastic competence and perceived social acceptance. The relationship formed between the mentor and mentee supports a strong social attachment that encourages adolescents to stay on the right track and achieve better grades (Kelley & Lee, 2018; Wilcox, McQuay, & Blackstaffe, 2017). For some boys, this is the added push needed for them to make a sincere effort to excel academically, while improving self-esteem, adult relationships, and general life skills.

School Belonging

For some boys, their lack of desire to flourish academically derives from their inability to feel like they belong in school. Adolescents' school belongingness is an important source of

motivation as adolescents spend the majority of their time in school. This means that students' academic engagement is partially shaped by their school environment (Wilcox et al., 2017). School connectedness is an important modifiable factor associated with students' learning and development (Yuen, Lau, Lee, Gysbers, & Chan, 2012). One might presume that students who attend school regularly, concentrate on learning, adhere to rules, and get better grades (Wang & Holcombe, 2010), but realistically students are often disconnected from school. If students' self-esteem is tied to their academic success (Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, & Boyd, 2009), their sense of identity with academics would be consistent (Syed, Goza, Chemers, & Zurbriggen, 2012). Still many students, particularly boys, show aggression towards school. Fisher & Frey (2012) found that academically disengaged students often have histories of poor relationships with peers and of low achievement motivation. This is often the case for adolescent boys who struggle with identity in middle school. The changes that occur in the structure of adult and peer relationships may cause self-confidence and academic engagement to decline (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011). Since boys already experience school as gendered (Elmore & Oyserman, 2012), it is necessary for educators to promote boys' growth through preventive programming and curriculum development in life skills (O'Neil & Lujan, 2009). Mentoring provides this type of intervention for boys you may lack self-esteem, social skills, rule compliance, and school connectedness (Yuen, Lau, Lee, Gysbers, & Chan, 2012). Studies show that participation in school-based activities, such as mentoring, increases students' sense of school belonging and leads to improved attendance and academic performance (Herrera et al, 2011). Teachers and counselors are in an excellent position to provide these interventions to adolescent boys as they already have a specific interest in the students' achievement. These high-quality mentoring relationships further promote greater self-efficacy and more positive

social relationships (Syed et al, 2012). Mentors promote the academic achievement of boys simply by including them in a group that supports their efforts.

Behavioral Issues

King (2016) found that behaviorally engaged students exert effort, demonstrate on-task behaviors and participate in class. Students who are emotionally engaged are enthusiastic in school and enjoy the learning process. But what happens when students are not behaviorally or emotionally engaged? Are these students allowed to fall by the waist side? Do their adverse emotional prevent them from functioning in school and in society? The Boy Code, identified by Pollack (2000) argued that boys are viewed as weak for expressing vulnerability and feelings (Irwin, 2013). To avoid the perception of being weak, boys show anger as a recourse (Burton, 2012). Consequently, these behaviors paint a dark portrait of boys as violent and unable to sit still in a classroom that is typically led by a female teacher (Fisher & Frey, 2012). In comparison to female students, boys are more likely to display poor social skills. Boys have fewer calming hormones than girls and thus are more likely to fidget and act impulsively (Burton, 2012). Their interactions in the school are often guided by aggression or immaturity that result in disciplinary actions. Over time, the adverse actions of boys become an expectation of parents and of teachers (Glock & Klapproth, 2017), while girls are viewed as good students. These gender role conflicts have significantly predicted boys' psychological distress, family problems, conduct problems and negative emotions (O'Neil & Lujan, 2009). The result is delinquency in boys that increases in adolescence and peaks around the age of seventeen (Kelley & Lee, 2018). The sensation of negative behaviors becomes acceptable for boys and further widens the achievement gap. Byck, Swan, Schalet, Bolland, & Mustanski (2015) found an association between sensation seeking and conduct problems that explains the disconnect between perceived risk and continued engagement

in negative behaviors. If boys are expected to display negative behaviors, why should they make efforts to be positive? Instead, they conform to expectation and exhibit conduct issues in school and at home.

While negative parenting behaviors such as poor supervision and inconsistent discipline contribute to conduct problems in adolescents (Racz & McMahon, 2011), deviance in adolescence is common for this transitional stage of development (Mushtag & Kausar, 2018). The personality traits of aggressiveness and sensation seeking usually peak during adolescence (Bijvank, Konijn, & Bushman, 2012) as these are adolescents' misguided attempts to obtain a sense of adult status (Dandreaux & Frick, 2009). Risky behaviors, however, could lead adolescents towards high levels of substance use and sexual risk taking (Byck, Swann, Schalet, Bolland, & Mustanski, 2015). These behaviors could be detrimental to future ambitions. What boys perceive as fun, could have lasting effects on their lives.

There could be numerous causes for of boys' aggression and misconduct in school. Yuen, Lau, Lee Gysbers, & Chan (2012) found angry behavior and violence to be more prevalent among students who were alienated in school. Low social status causes students to disengage from school and engage in problem behaviors (Meijs et al., 2010; Wang & Halcombe, 2010). Since peer influence is so high during this developmental stage, boys in particular, regard dominant and aggressive peers as positive (Jamison, Wilson, & Ryan, 2014). The benefits of positive behavior may not be realistic to boys who are often in trouble, so they act out for peer acceptance. To prevent this from occurring, positive behaviors must be reinforced to facilitate student learning (Yeung, Barker, Tracey, & Mooney, 2013). In addition, the environment must reject these aggressive and deviant behaviors (Shechtman & Ifargan, 2009) and expose adolescent boys to the benefits of positive interactions. Boys need to feel acceptance in a caring

environment. Mentoring could be used to counter the attitude that no one care (Gordon et al., 2009). Instead of being disciplined for immature and aggressive acts, through mentoring, boys can be taught the proper way to behave. Mentoring operates as a protective factor from disruptive behavior, school punishment, and educational attrition (Sykes, Gioviano, & Piquero, 2014). Positive mentorship allows youth to change their perception on which behaviors are acceptable and which are not, so they can make better life choices.

Motivation

From my personal experience in mentoring adolescent boys, I have found that the largest factor preventing boys' success in school is not academic ability or knowledge of appropriate behavior, but motivation. Yeung & Curwood (2015) defined motivation as individual energy that stems from a student's desire and willpower to learn, work, and reach their potential. In fact, motivation is a necessary precondition for student involvement in learning (Ciampa, 2013). Boys develop various mindsets about their abilities based on societal expectations and the norms of their own environment. The level of effort that they apply to their education is often consistent with the motivation of those who are surround them. Tynerv & Petrilli (2018) argue that student effort is probably the most important input in the educational process. If students do not perceive themselves as competent learners who are motivated to achieve good grades (Guay, Ratelle, Roy, & Litalien, 2010), their lack of confidence to self-regulate learning will create high levels of delay (Klassen & Kuzucu, 2017). Academic failure results from a lack of non-cognitive skills such as self-esteem, motivation, and perseverance of personal and social barriers (Rodriguez-Planas, 2012). All children have the ability to learn, though all do not possess the determination to excel academically.

Studies show a decline in motivation, academic engagement, and lower self-perception as children transition to middle school (Jamison, Wilson, & Rya, 2014; Yeng, Lau, & Nie, 2011). Considering the hormonal changes of adolescence, these youth incur higher levels of stress which often result in their lack of cognitive resources and poor behaviors (King & Ganotice, 2014; Glock & Klapproth, 2017). Boys most often experience this developmental stage with lower levels of motivation and lower levels of achievement than girls. Senn (2012) reports that 70% to 80% of students who demonstrate a lack of motivation in school are boys. Though research has supported these facts in numerous studies, boys still lack external motivators. Boys need encouragement in order to see the benefits of their academic efforts. Encouraged people realize that all learning involves mistakes and they view these mistakes as opportunities for development (Khan, 2013). Teachers, parents, and mentors must move past boys' mistakes and invest in their motivation to promote explicit attitudes towards their behavior and progress. Short and long-term goals must be established for boys to excel. Their perceived rewards for learning must be relevant to them in order to prompt greater effort. If the motivation is perceived as self-determined, it leads to more positive outcomes such as persistent good behavior and school performance (Simek & Grum, 2011). In the onset of their meeting, mentors and mentees establish personal, academic, and behavior goals to achieve. Short term goals have greater focus, though long-term goals are necessary for future life skills. The mentor relationship allows boys to rationalize in the here and now in order to determine their futures. Defining strengths, fears, and ambitions are valuable for determining growth. Using dialogue as a primary theme, mentoring programs contribute to self-definition and self-discovery (Lindsay-Dennis, Cummings, & McClendon, 2011). Greater achievement is found in self goals that are established and achieved. Boys must be provided with visual signs of accomplishments,

provided with clear goals and immediate feedback (Wilhelm & Smith, 2015). Consistent instruction in these areas motivate boys to make progress not only for themselves, but also for the promotion of the mentoring relationship.

African American Experience

African American boys might have a greater need for mentoring relationships than any other racial or ethnic group. Historically, African American children have been at greater risks of school-based issues due to the low socioeconomic status of their household. Past family experiences with academic struggles often transfer onto children predicting their lower academic achievement (Carey, 2017; Heyder et al, 2017). The inability of parents to meet a child's developmental needs results in adverse behaviors and stressors which leave children more vulnerable to increases in emotional problems (Dandreaux & Frick, 2009; Schechter et al, 2012). Racial barriers in academics cause African American children to devalue education as they do not perceive academic excellence to be beneficial to their maturation nor do they see members of their ethnicity in higher positions. African American males are exposed more to suicide, homicide, involvement with crime, gang violence and drug problems (Harper, Linda, & Twiggs, 2009). They are labeled as aggressive and looked upon with fear and anxiety (Fisher & Frey, 2012; Dumas & Nelson, 2016). As compared to their white peers, these boys are viewed as less trustworthy, making them the object of blame in school (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). Their treatment by peers and often adults makes them feel as though they are undeserving of the emotional and moral recognition achieved by those around them. Their journey to manhood becomes very complex as they are more likely to go to prison than to achieve a healthy adult life (Wyatt, 2009; Fantuzzo et al, 2012). Because of these perceptions, African American boys are often less engaged in school, scoring an average of 28 points lower in both reading and math as

compared to white boys (Fantuzzo et al., 2012). To make matters worse, these children are viewed as responsible for their own school failures, regardless of the educational resources available. They are among the most invisible, most underrepresented, and misrepresented of all children (Dumas & Nelson, 2016). Society often eliminates them from reality instead of acknowledging their shortcomings and designing programs of assistance.

With the many challenges that they may face during maturation, African American boys would benefit from joining programs that promote positivity. Participation in such programs provide boys with the tools to adapt to adversity and to catch up to their peers (Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, 2009). Connection with a mentor helps boys develop their racial and cultural identity which will greatly benefit them in the real world. Mentors help build the social and cultural capital that many boys lack by helping them navigate school successfully (Rodriguez-Planas, 2012). Grades, behavior, and other social skills are modeled by mentors who understand the adversity faced by these boys and have a sincere interest in helping them achieve goals. For African American boys, mentor serves as an example of how exhibiting more productive behavior and excelling academically can lead to upward mobility (Gaddis, 2012). Seeing the progress of a positive mentor empowers African American boys to model positive behaviors as well.

Gender/Race

It is customary for boys to have male mentors, but little research has determined whether or not same gender and same race mentoring is better for children. During adolescence, boys have a strong need for a positive relationship with an adult male. This connection provides boys with a model of how to appropriately manage emotions, behaviors, and thought processes. These are processes that cannot be adequately taught by a woman as a female will not fully

understand what it means to be a man. The relational needs and patterns of men and women are so diverse that these cannot be satisfied in a cross-gender mentorship (Kanchewa et al, 2014). The gender-specific experiences and challenges of young boys are better addressed by adult males who have had similar experiences.

The Similar-attraction theory by Byrne's (1971) posits that individuals prefer to interact with people who are similar to themselves (Kao, Rogers, Spitzmueller, Lin & Lin, 2014). Although this is not always a reality as the diversity of modern times is much different than it was in the late 1970s, still we find some groups of people who prefer to be around their own racial and ethnic group. Gaddis (2012) found that minorities and individuals with low socioeconomic status typically have lower levels of cross-racial trust. This is often a generational cognition where parents have taught their children to be guarded against other races and ethnicities. The mistrust of parents transfers onto their children. For these reasons, disadvantaged and vulnerable youth, may be better matched with mentors of their own race as these mentors are more likely to understand the racial and cultural barriers that the mentee experiences (Coller & Kuo, 2014; Lee et al., 2010). Same-race relationships promote sympathy and empathy. The personal real-life examples provided by these mentors have strong attitudinal and psychosocial outcomes for children (Lindsay-Dennis et al, 2011; Syed et al., 2012). This combination of same-gender and same-race mentoring provides boys with not only a male model for masculine qualities, but also one that understands the adversity that may correlate with their race. For African American boys, this mentorship is often necessary for their survival in a society that already expects them to fail.

Steps for Mentoring Boys

Adolescent males are not likely to sit down and just open up about their feelings (Burton, 2012). First, strong relationships must be established. Mutual trust, respect, and genuineness are all essential for mentoring boys. Adolescents have the ability to sense phonies in therapeutic attempts and will quickly shut down at these attempts. Relationships are especially important when working with urban and ethnic minorities as these boys already have an abundance of stress to cope with (Vera, Vacek, Coyle, Stinson, Mull, Doud, Buchheit, Gorman, Hewitt, Keene, Blackmon, & Langrehr, 2011). Providing them with false hopes of a father figure or a secure relationship could result in added stress. Mentors should focus on supporting boys through life's challenges, motivating them to take responsible actions, and providing them with the tools for healthy choices (Harper, Linda, & Twiggs, 2009). These are often tools that adolescent boys lack in their maturation, but are necessary for healthy development.

Utilizing a mentoring group as an intervention for boys is powerful in that boys not only receive direction from adults, but it also allows for peer group counseling (Egbochuku & Aihie, 2009). Every individual brings different life experiences and different personalities to the group. Adolescent boys can benefit from hearing the experiences of their peers and acknowledging that they are not the only ones experiencing adversity. Relating to peer experiences is a powerful strategy in the formation of relationships. The mentoring group then develops into a family or perhaps a society of young men who gather for a common purpose; the formation and progress of men. The gains in academics, behavior, and motivation are but a bi-product of mentoring boys. Additionally, the bond forged between boys and men creates further opportunities for healing from past trauma, the formation of future leaders, and the creation of a society that values the strength of a man and his purpose.

Summary

Mentoring is a powerful tool to help adolescents make strides in academics, behavior, and social skills. In their search for identity, adolescents need positive models to help them shape their concept of how a man should look and behave. Peer influences are so strong in this stage of life that adolescent boys often prefer to idolize those in their own age group instead of adult models. Erickson refers to this conflict as a struggle between identity and role confusion. Positive adult models are needed during this period as peer models have not acquired the life skills needed to shape anyone's personality.

Attachments are formed in the early stages of life. Infants attach to their mothers as they are the source of food and caregiving. As these infants develop, other attachments are developed as their needs expand beyond that of nutritional care. Bowlby expressed the need for trust in forming secured relationships. While past experiences may alter the level of trust someone has, it is imperative for youth to have these trusting relationships. Since many youth rebel against parental authority, non-parental models are needed to help guide them in a positive direction. Each individual develops within a zone of proximal development identifying knowledge that can be acquired with and without adult guidance. As these adolescents continuously search for knowledge, they will have to distinguish between positive and negative models. These models form the images of their social mirrors for which adolescents use to develop their own identity. Positive images yield positive models while negative images may be detrimental to youth development. Adolescent boys who live in environments of domestic violence, abuse, drugs, and other hazards may have more difficulty finding positive mirror images. Their perceptions of appropriate behavior and thinking may be altered by the interactions of their environment. Positive mentors are needed to help youth distinguish between right and wrong. Mentors can

challenge negative views that youth may have of themselves by modeling caring and providing support (DuBois et al, 2011). This is especially needed for boys who are often subject to bad behaviors and aggression.

Maslow identified five needs in his motivational theory. The needs of belongingness and esteem are especially important for adolescents as they are establishing their identities.

Adolescents want to feel like they fit in and are not outcasts in their social environments. They also want to feel good about themselves at home and in their peer environment. Relationships formed between mentors and mentees may open the doors to activities, resources, and educational opportunities to assist youth in constructing their identity (DuBois et al, 2011).

Mentors may help shift youth conceptions of both their current and future identities. This will promote the improvement of interpersonal skills, self-confidence, attitudes towards school, and academic achievement (Wyatt, 2009).

Khan (2013) posits that mentoring affects youth through three interrelated processes: by enhancing social relationships and emotional well-being, by improving cognitive skills, and by promoting positive identity development. Consistency is needed for mentoring to be effective. The relationship between the mentor and mentee can only be secured with invested time. Youth must feel that the adult has a sincere concern for their well-being in order to open up to them. Especially for boys, who often hide their true emotions, this bond is necessary to make any real improvements.

According to the Ragin's theory, the more similar to oneself a person perceives another to be, the more that individual is likely to have interpersonal attraction to the person (Park et al, 2017). Boys need male models to be productive citizens. More specifically, boys need male models of their own race and ethnicity to obtain the heights of their potential. This is not to say

that a Caucasian male cannot teach an African American boy, but a Caucasian male cannot fully understand the struggles that the African American boy might face during maturation. Adversity meets racial groups at different levels and coping skills are developed overtime to meet the various needs of each group. A person cannot fully resolve an issue that they have never experienced. These lessons must be acquired by individuals who have developed the skills needed for survival. For African American boys, male models of their own background are most beneficial to assist them with coping with the adversities they will face and learning how to excel above unjust treatments.

For boys, the major struggle for academic excellence is getting them to view school as important for their development. Many boys feel that being smart is a feminine trait and would rather follow the masculine trait of being cool. This perception causes boys to put forth less effort in their studies and more efforts in socialization. In addition, their behaviors have a tendency to draw negative attention. The social status of being considered the class clown is more appealing to boys than being a model student. As a result, their inappropriate behaviors make them subject to school disciplinary actions, possible expulsions, and the cradle to prison ideology. This is not to say that boys are less intelligent than girls, but simply less motivated.

Motivating boys to excel academically can be a challenge as their wants and needs vary. Monetary gifts and material items are often used by parents as motivators but have short term effects. For boys, rewards must be short term and encouragement is needed along the way. Long term goals have less effects on boys' behavior as they are no within immediate reach. Since boys have a natural instinct to be competitive, finding a way to incorporate competition into the reward system might yield greater benefits. As with athletic events and video games, boys find pleasure in beating their opponent. Mentoring programs that incorporate competition

into their goals might be more effective in motivating boys excel in school and in life.

Considering the developmental nature of their age group, mentors must develop a plan to encourage academics, decrease disciplinary concerns, and promote greater character. These programs need immediate attention as the number of youth delinquencies are increasing by day.

Positive men are needed to provide positive models for young boys to follow. The unavailability of these models further cripples the develop of young boys leaving them vulnerable to negative influences and criminal behaviors.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The Male Call mentoring program consists of middle school boys in grades six through eight who have had previous struggles with academics and school discipline. Male mentors were assigned to these students to motivate them to make strides in academics and improvements in their behaviors. This research sought to evaluate the effectiveness of mentoring on student outcomes. In this chapter will expand upon the research design, research questions, the hypotheses, and participants of this study. It will also explain the instrumentation, procedures and data analysis used.

Design

A causal-comparative research design was used to determine the effects of mentoring on student outcomes. This type of research design has been found to be useful when examining the possible effects of variables that are difficult to manipulate experimentally (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). Mentoring as an independent variable was hypothesized to have positive effects on the dependent variables (academics, behavior) for boys participating in the Male Call mentoring program. Causal-comparative research is valuable in this study as its purpose is to identify possible causes and effects between group variables (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). An additional variable, the race of the mentor, was included to determine if same versus cross-race mentoring had a positive or negative effect on the academics and behaviors of boys participating in these mentoring relationships.

Research Questions

Adolescent boys have historically performed poorly in school as compared to adolescent girls. Boys have been labeled as having conduct issues and displaying deviant behaviors in school. African American boys in middle school lack the motivation to excel in academics and have more disciplinary concerns than other subgroups. The Male Call mentoring program sought to motivate adolescent boys to make gains in academics and in positive school behaviors. Mentors were paired with small groups to motivate these boys to increase their academic efforts, make healthy decisions, and model good character. This research sought to answer three research questions:

RQ1: Can male mentors motivate boys to make gains in school academics?

RQ2: Can mentoring encourage boys to behave appropriately in school?

RQ3: Does having a mentor of the same race/ethnicity yield greater outcomes?

Mentors worked with boys to assist with goal setting, decision making, and conflict resolution. Trusting relationships between the boys and their mentors assist in the motivation to behave and the excel academically.

Hypotheses

This research proposed that there is a causal-comparative relationship between mentoring, academics and behavioral outcomes for boys participating in the Male Call mentoring group. The following hypotheses for this research are:

H1: There will be a cause and effect relationship between mentoring and academic grades of boys participating in Male Call. Data reporting students' Grade Point Averages (GPAs) will reflect a significantly greater outcomes for boys who are participants in the group as compared to boys without the mentoring variable.

H2: There will be a cause and effect relationship between mentoring and the behavior of boys participating in Male Call. Reporting data will reflect a significantly greater outcomes in disciplinary referrals for Male Call participants for the period engaged in mentoring as compared to boys without the mentoring variable.

H3: There will be significantly greater academic grades and significantly lower number of disciplinary infractions for Male Call students who had a same-race mentor as compared to members who had a cross-race mentor.

Participants and Setting

The participants for the study were drawn from a convenience sample of middle school students located in Prince William County, Virginia during the 2019 - 2020 school year. The school district is a middle-to-upper income suburb in the northeast area of the city's center. The demographics of the middle school population is 35% Caucasian, 27% Hispanic, 26% African American, 8% Asian and 4% other races. Historically, African Americans males have scored significantly lower than other subgroups on the Standard of Learning (SOL) assessments. Lowering this achievement gap is a part of the school's strategic plan for instruction as a goal is for all students to obtain a high level of proficiency in instruction. African American males historically acquire more disciplinary infractions than all other subgroups as well. These concerns form the basis of this study and the motivation to implement this mentoring program.

For this study, an experimental group of 30 participants were randomly sampled out of pre-qualified group of students (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). All participants selected for the program were African American students in grades six to eight whose SOL scores in math and reading are less than a 400 and who had at least two disciplinary infractions for inappropriate behaviors from the previous school year. The SOL is a standardized testing program that is

administered to all students in Virginia's Public Schools. The standards of the SOL align with what teachers, school administrators, parents, and other stakeholders believe students should learn. Middle school students are assessed in English and in mathematics in grades 3-8 to determine their level of achievement and the need for further instruction. Performance on the SOL is scored on a scale of 0-600 with 400 representing the minimum level of acceptable proficiency. Student scores reporting below a 400 are considered basic and need further attention.

Male mentors were selected from the available school staff members who are willing to work with the young men. Mentor training was conducted by the school counselor to include information on meeting times, expectations, relationship building, and strategies for motivating youth. A grade level administrator as well as one of school counselors served as mentors in addition to four other adults. Four of the mentors were African American males, one mentor was Hispanic, and one Caucasian. Participants were divided into six smaller groups and paired with a male mentor of special interest. In most cases, students were paired with their current or previous teacher. For the groups led by the counselor and the administrator, students were selected from the grade levels for which they currently serve. These pairs provide for a healthy relationship as previous bonds were already established. Figure 1 explains the division of the groups:

Figure 1: Mentor/Mentee Pairs

Groups	Mentor	Mentees	Special Interest
A	Caucasian 6th grade Teacher	All 6 th grade students	Currently teach students
B	African American	Combination of 6 th	Currently teach or previously

	7th Grade Teacher	and 7 th graders	taught students last year
C	Hispanic 7 th Grade Teacher	7th Graders	Currently teach students
D	African American Elective Teacher	7th and 8 th Graders	Currently teach or previously taught students last year
E	African American Counselor	8th Graders	Grade level counselor
F	African American Administrator	8th Graders	Grade level administrator

The mentor and mentee relationship persisted for a four-month period. Data consisting of academic grades and disciplinary infractions were collected monthly and converted to a point system to allow for group competition. Groups obtaining the highest number of points were awarded monthly as motivation to obtain higher academics and positive behaviors.

The control group consisted of twelve African American boys who meet the same criteria based on SOL assessment scores and disciplinary infractions but are not participants in the mentoring program. These students' grades and discipline were analyzed for data purposes only and had no contact with a school based male mentor. The school data collection system was utilized to obtain disciplinary records and SOL scores.

The objectives of this study directly align to the strategic plan of the school and the principal's vision. The program meets the ethical standards of the principal and have been granted approval. Informed consent letters were sent home to the parents of members of the mentoring program as well as the participants of the control group. Parent signatures were required for students to be active participants in the Male Call mentoring program and participants in this study. Copies of these letters were maintained by the program lead for further reference.

Instrumentation

This research sought to determine if mentoring has a positive effect on the academics and behaviors of middle school boys. It also sought to determine if having a same-race mentor as opposed to a cross-race mentor would yield any significant difference in results. Prince William County utilizes the Synergy Student Information System as the school data collection system for all schools in grades K-12. The system allows school to manage student demographic information, grades, discipline, attendance, test scores and other pertinent information. Through Synergy, reports can be run to determine students' rate of achievement, discipline, and assessment comparisons. School counselors and administrators have full access to all student data within their building. Data acquired through Synergy was used to evaluate the academics and discipline of the participants of this study. Academic grades on all participants were collected monthly for male call participants to assist them with obtaining short term academic goals. Disciplinary records were reviewed monthly to guide group discussions and redirection. The use these instruments and data collections were granted by informed consent of participants and by Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

Procedures

The first step of forming a mentoring group is determining the purpose of the group and the population to address. The issue is that African American boys consistently perform poorer than any other subgroup in school academics and have higher rates of disciplinary infractions. This research used mentoring as an avenue to motivate African American boys to excel in academics and decrease inappropriate behaviors. The general concept is that adolescent boys need short term motivators to excel in school. In addition, competition can be used to motivate adolescent boys as boys love healthy competition. Male Call participants' grades and discipline

were reviewed monthly to acquire individual points and compare groups. Figure 2 explains the point system that was utilized for monthly comparisons of groups in the mentoring program:

Figure 2: Male Call Point Scale

As (90–100) on a monthly grade review	10 points per “A”
Bs (80-89) on monthly grade review	5 points per “B”
Cs (70-79) on monthly grade review	3 points per “C”
Disciplinary Infraction (referrals)	10 points deducted per referral

This initiative begins with identifying a target population. In this study, boys whose Spring 2019 SOL scores fall below 400 and who had at least two disciplinary infractions were identified as in need of mentors. Mentors were selected out of available staff that were willing to invest time in this research and attempt to make a change in the lives of adolescent boys. Mentors met to determine how they would work to develop character among the boys and motivate them to excel. The program held bi-monthly group meetings to address character and present meaningful workshops. In addition, mentors met with the mentees weekly for relationship building and conflict resolutions.

Once IRB approval was obtained, students were randomly selected from the pool of qualifiers (based on SOL scores and discipline records) to participate in the study. Letters were sent home to parents explaining the goals of the group, requirements and purpose of the study. Informed consent letters were secured for participants in both the experimental and control groups. Mentors were paired with mentees of special interest, making six mentor groups. Each

mentor groups consisted of five mentees who already have an existing relationship with their mentor. The mentor and mentee relationship persisted for four months.

To determine whether or not mentoring was effective, participants' grades and discipline were recorded monthly and points were awarded for progress. Groups competed monthly to determine who made more progress based on increases in academic grades and decreases in discipline. Field studies were included as incentives for participants who were passing all academic courses and had no disciplinary infractions for that month. Academic grades and discipline of male call participants were compared across groups to determine if having a same-race mentor has a more positive effect of student data than having a cross-race mentor. Participants' academic grades and discipline were used in comparison to the control group (without a mentor) to determine whether or not mentoring has a positive effective on student outcomes.

Data Analysis

The independent variable of this study was the inclusion of mentoring while the dependent variables are academic grades, school discipline, and race of mentor. Data was analyzed based on the mean scores of each of the six groups receiving mentoring and the groups without mentors to determine whether or not the effect size is statistically significant. Gall, Gall, & Borg (2010) note that an effect size of .33 or larger is used to determine statistical significance. Hypothesis 1 proposed that academic grades for students who have a mentor will have significantly better outcomes than the control group. To evaluate this, participants' Grade Point Averages (GPAs) for 2020 were reviewed. Hypothesis 2 proposed that disciplinary referrals for students who had a mentor would have significantly better outcomes than participants of the control group. Reports on the total number disciplinary referrals received by

Male Call participants were compared to the control group. Hypothesis 3 proposed that groups with the same-race mentor would yield greater scores than groups with a cross-race mentor. For all hypotheses, Synergy was utilized as a tool for data collection. Data to include GPAs and disciplinary records were compared between participants within the Male Call program as well as to the control group of students not receiving any mentoring.

An Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the mean scores of each of the groups based on GPAs and disciplinary reports. Gall, Gall, & Borg (2010) note that the ANOVA is used to determine if there is a difference in the means of three or more group samples and is reflected by an F-ratio. A series of one-way ANOVAs were used in this study to compare the GPA and discipline of students receiving mentoring and those without a mentor. This study attempted to reject the Null Hypothesis that mentoring has no significant effect on student outcomes. Mean scores of participants were compared between the groups (mentoring vs no mentoring) and within the group (groups lead by same or cross-race mentors). The proposed findings suggest a significant difference between groups indicated by a significant value less than .05 ($p < .05$) and the F-ratio for all factors was greater than 1, showing a significant effect of mentoring of student outcomes. These statistical results were utilized in this research in an effort to reject the null hypotheses.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to show the effects of mentoring on student academics and behavior. A mentoring group of 30 middle school boys were compared to a control group of 12 boys who did not receive mentoring. Male Call, the mentoring group, was divided into six smaller groups, each with its own mentor. Four mentors were African American (AA) and two were non-African American (White and Hispanic). All mentors received the same training to assist the students with their motivation to excel in academics and behavior. In addition to comparing the efforts Male Call members to the control group without mentoring, this research also sought to determine whether or not having a same-race mentor yielded significant growth. The research questions are as followed:

RQ1: Can male mentors motivate boys to make gains in school academics?

RQ2: Can mentoring encourage boys to behave appropriately in school?

RQ3: Does having a mentor of the same race/ethnicity yield greater outcomes?

This section will discuss the findings of this study leading to an overall evaluation of each hypothesis.

Participants

Male Call members (30) were compared to a control group of 12 students who did not receive any mentoring during the school year ($N=42$). All participants were identified as having lower academic test scores based a standardized assessment (SOL) below 400 as well as at least two disciplinary referrals the previous school year. Participants were identified in this study

using pseudonyms that resemble alpha characters (A1 – G12). Table 1 shows a distribution of students by groups to include the students' GPA and number of disciplinary referrals.

Table 1: *Distribution of Student Data*

Group A (Caucasian Mentor)			Group D (AA Mentor)			Group G (NO Mentor)		
Student	GPA	Referrals	Student	GPA	Referrals	Student	GPA	Referrals
A1	2.6	0	D1	3.0	0	G1	1.0	13
A2	1.6	0	D2	2.4	4	G2	2.9	7
A3	2.5	1	D3	0.9	6	G3	1.9	0
A4	3.0	1	D4	2.7	0	G4	2.0	5
A5	2.2	0	D5	2.4	4	G5	1.3	2
Group B (AA Mentor)			Group E (AA Mentor)			G6	.8	4
Student	GPA	Referrals	Student	GPA	Referrals	G7	1.3	3
B1	2.3	0	E1	2.7	2	G8	1.0	8
B2	3.2	0	E2	2.5	0	G9	0.7	2
B3	2.6	0	E3	2.7	1	G10	1.6	5
B4	2.5	2	E4	2.3	3	G11	1.2	1
B5	3.0	0	E5	1.0	1	G12	0.6	0
Group C (Hispanic Mentor)			Group F (AA Mentor)					
Student	GPA	Referrals	Student	GPA	Referrals			
C1	2.9	2	F1	2.4	0			
C2	1.1	7	F2	1.7	1			
C3	2.4	7	F3	2.8	0			
C4	2.1	0	F4	1.3	1			
C5	2.4	0	F5	2.7	0			

Group A

Group A consisted of five boys in grade 6, all of which were students of Mentor A. These students are identified as A1, A2, A3, A4, and A5. Mentor A, a Caucasian teacher, reported having a good relationship with his boys. The boys would voluntarily tell Mentor A about their successes in and out of the classroom. They were all very respectful to him and to their teachers. He noted that they were good students but often did not work to their full potential. Student A2 had significant academic struggles during the year but did manage to stay

out of trouble. Although students A3 and A4 did end the year with 1 disciplinary infraction, this was a great improvement from the previous school year. Mentor A reported that his boys would often come to him for help with their class assignments and for advice.

Group B

Mentor B, an African American teacher, had a group consisting of students in both grades 6 and 7. These students were either currently in his class or had his class the previous year. Mentor B reported being very proud of his boys for their academic gains. All of his group members ended the school year with a GPA above 2.0. Two of his boys, B2 and B5 ended with at least a 3.0 GPA. His only challenge was controlling the behavior of student B4. Mentor B stated that although B4 was a bright young man who made decent grades and spoke intelligently. His home life, however, wasn't that desirable. He believed this contributed to B4's conduct issues.

Group C

Mentor C was a Hispanic teacher whose group consisted of students in grade 7. Mentor C noted that he struggled with his group because of their lack of maturity. Students C2 and C3 were the most challenging as they were friends and often got in trouble together. Their issues ranged from cutting school to causing class disruptions. The other group members made significant improvements with both their grades and behavior, but consistent efforts were made to reframe their negative behaviors. Mentor C admired the way that group members encouraged one another and never put each other down.

Group D

Mentor D was an African American physical education teacher whose group consisted of students in grades 7 and 8. Although Mentor D was well respected by the students, he

commented that coaching often distracted his efforts to form meaningful relationships with the boys. Students D1 and D4 made consistent efforts to improve academically and manage their conduct. The other students had several challenges with discipline and D3 with grades. Mentor D expressed his disappointment with these members as they were 8th graders and should have been setting an example for the others.

Group E

Mentor E was a male school counselor who had relationships with all students. His group consisted of five students in grade 8. Mentor E reported having a close relationship with each of his boys and was proud of their efforts. Two of the participants, E4 and E5, were in special education classes and had progressed more than they had in the previous two years in middle school. He noted that although some group members did get into trouble, the results were much better than they had experienced before joining Male Call.

Group F

Group F was led by one of the school's administrators, Mentor F. His group consisted of students in grade 8 who made significant gains throughout the school year. Mentor F reported that he was amazed by the progress of all the Male Call members. Although they weren't perfect, Mentor F felt that the boys were at least motivated to improve. The incentives of peer recognition, competition, and the opportunity to leave the building for a field study, were an added push for the students do better.

Group G

Group G consisted of 12 boys who did not have a mentor. Many of these boys had no male figure in their lives but did not take advantage of the opportunity to join the Male Call group. Several teachers commented that these boys were far more capable of achieving more

than their GPAs show as they could articulate their thoughts well verbally and carry on intelligent discussions when interested in the topic. Teachers believed that their motivation was often clouded by efforts to gain attention in the classroom and impress their peers. Several students in this group concluded the year on the retention list while one, (G1) was almost expelled from school for fighting and consistent misconduct. Only one member, G2, achieved a GPA above 2.0 but even he had some challenges with behavior. As an added intervention for these students, the administration has discussed mandatory participation in a mentoring program as a part of their action plan for the coming year.

Results

A series of one-way between subject ANOVAs were conducted (3 in total) in order to assess differences in mean GPA and number of disciplinary referrals by group and mentor race. First, to address hypotheses 1 (H1) a one-way between subject ANOVA was conducted to compare mean GPA for the group assigned a mentor and the group assigned to the control condition (i.e., no mentor). Second, another one-way between subject ANOVA was conducted to compare mean number of disciplinary referrals for the group assigned a mentor and the group assigned to the control condition (i.e., no mentor). Lastly, a final a one-way between subject ANOVA was conducted to compare mean GPA and number of disciplinary referrals by groups based on the race of the assigned mentor.

Hypothesis 1 (H1)

Students in the mentor group will show higher academic performance (i.e., GPA) than will students in the control (i.e., no mentor) group. That comparison of the means of the two groups (mentor vs. control) will indicate that the population means will be significantly different; specifically, it is expected that students in Male Call will be found to have higher mean GPA

scores than will students in the Control group. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare students' mean academic performance (i.e., GPA) in the groups in which a mentor was assigned (i.e., experimental group) and the group in which no mentor was assigned (i.e., control group). See Table 2 for descriptive statistics. Prior to analysis, a Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was conducted to test for any violations of the homogeneity of variance assumption across group means, no violations were found [$F(1, 40) = 0.089, p = 0.767$]. As expected, results provided support of significant difference in GPA between groups (See Table 3). Specifically, findings showed a significant effect of group assignment on GPA at the $p < .05$ level for both groups [$F(1, 40) = 20.761, p = 0.000$]. Consistent with what was hypothesized, results indicated that the mean GPA score for the mentor inclusion group ($M = 2.330, SD = .6115$) was significantly different than the no mentor group ($M = 1.358, SD = .6571$). Findings suggest differences by groups in terms of mean GPA scores; specifically, findings suggest the possibility that being assigned a mentor has a positive effect on students' academic performance.

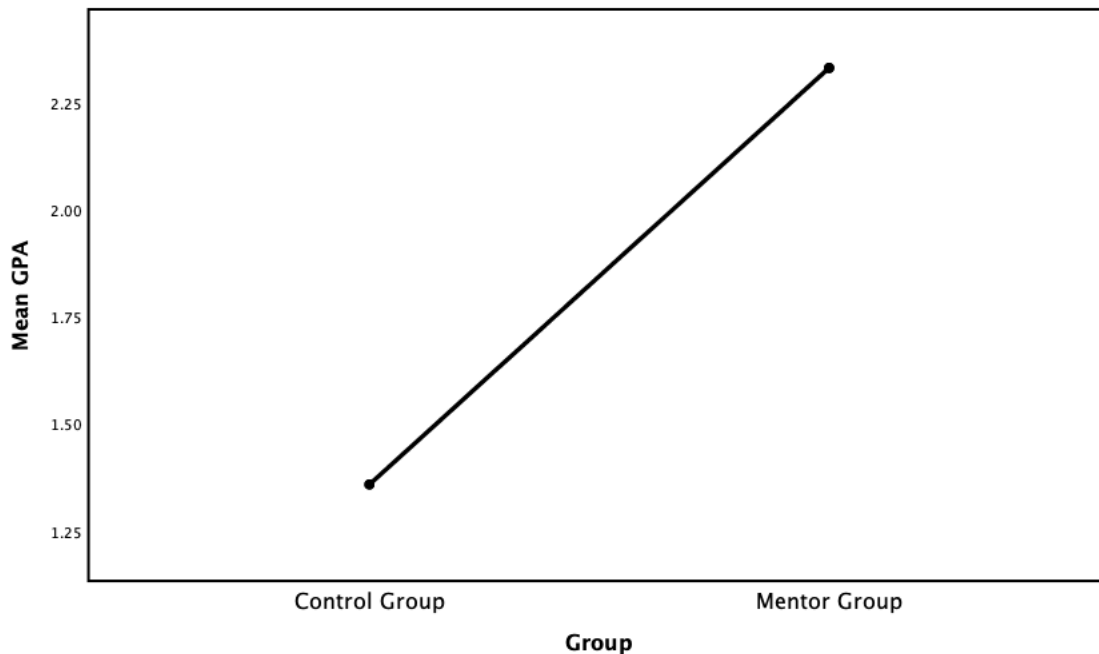


Figure 3. Means plot (One-way ANOVA) of GPA by group.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Control and Mentor Groups by GPA

Group	N	Mean	SD
Control Group	12	1.358	0.65
Mentor Group	30	2.330	0.61
Total	42	2.052	0.76

Table 3. One-Way Analysis of Variance of GPA by Mentor Group

	SS	Df	MS	F	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	8.09	1	8.093	20.76	<.05*
Within Groups	15.59	40	.390		
Total	23.69	41			

* $P < .05$

Hypothesis 2 (H2)

It is hypothesized that students in the mentor group (i.e., Male Call) will show a significant decrease in disciplinary referrals in comparison to the students in the control (i.e., no mentor) group. That is, a comparison of the means of the two groups (mentor vs. control) will indicate that the population means will be significantly different; specifically, it is expected that students in Male Call will be found to have fewer disciplinary referrals than will students in the Control group. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare students' mean number of disciplinary referrals in the groups in which a mentor was assigned (i.e., experimental group) and the group in which no mentor was assigned (i.e., control group). See table 4 for descriptive statistics. Prior to analysis, a Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was conducted to test for any violations of the homogeneity of variance assumption across group

means. Results of the Levene's test suggested that the data violated the assumption of equal variances [$F(1, 40) = 4.759, p = 0.035$]. As such, we conducted a Welch's test [$F(1, 40) = 5.553, p = .034$] which suggested a significant difference in mean number of disciplinary infractions between groups at the $p < .05$ level [$F(1, 40) = 8.862, p = 0.005$]. As hypothesized, results indicated that the group that received mentoring had significantly fewer disciplinary referrals ($M = 1.43, SD = 2.128$) than did the control group that did not receive mentoring assistance ($M = 4.17, SD = 3.786$). Findings suggest significant difference between groups in mean number of disciplinary infractions (see table 5) and support the hypothesis (H2) that students in the mentor group would show decreased disciplinary infractions in comparison to the control group.

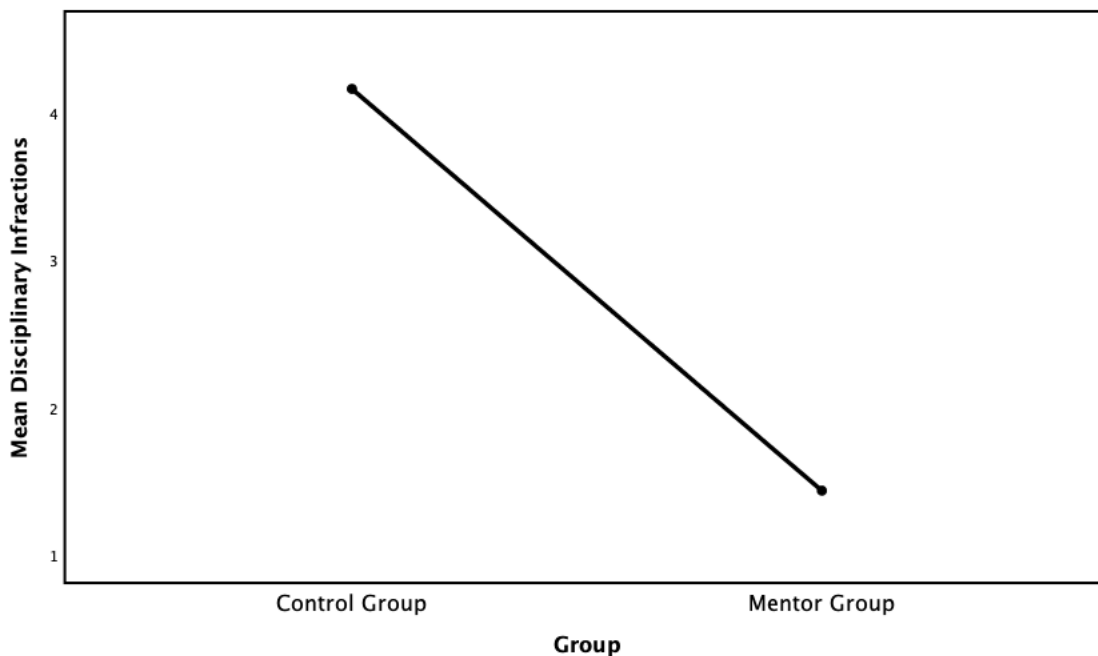


Figure 4. Means plot (One-way ANOVA) of disciplinary infractions by group.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of the Control and Mentor Groups by Discipline

Group	N	Mean	SD
Control Group	12	4.17	3.79
Mentor Group	30	1.43	2.12
Total	42	2.21	2.94

Table 5. One-Way Analysis of Variance of Discipline by Mentor Group

	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Groups	64.04	1	64.038	8.86	<.05*
Within Groups	289.03	40	7.226		
Total	353.07	41			

*P<.05

Hypothesis 3 (H3)

It is hypothesized that a significant difference will be found in terms of mean GPA and number of disciplinary infractions between students who were assigned a mentor of the same race (e.g., African American student matched to an African American mentor) and those who were in groups assigned a cross-race mentor (e.g., African American student matched to either a white or Hispanic mentor). It is expected that students in the mentor group that were assigned a same-race mentor will be found to have a higher mean GPA and significantly less mean disciplinary referrals than those assigned a cross-race mentor. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare students' mean number of disciplinary referrals and GPA scores in the groups in which a same-race mentor was assigned and the groups in which a cross-

race mentor was assigned (see table 6 for descriptive statistics). In addition, both groups mean scores on both GPA and number of disciplinary infractions will be compared to the mean GPA and number of disciplinary infractions of the control group.

Prior to analysis, a Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was conducted to test for any violations of the homogeneity of variance assumption across group means. Results of the Levene's test suggested the population variances of number of disciplinary infractions [$F(2, 39) = 3.167, p = 0.053$] and GPA [$F(2, 39) = .081, p = 0.923$] were equal for all groups. Consistent with expectations, findings showed a significant difference in mean number of disciplinary infractions $F(2, 39) = 4.488, p = 0.018$ and GPA between groups [$F(2, 39) = 10.192, p = 0.000$], indicating that there is a significant difference between mean GPA and disciplinary infractions between the groups as a whole (see table 6). A Tukey post hoc test was conducted to make comparisons between the same-race, cross-race, and control groups. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean discipline score for both the same-race group ($M = 1.25, SD = 1.743$) and the cross-race group ($M = 1.80, SD = 2.821$) were significantly different from the control group ($M = 4.17, SD = 3.786$), indicating that both groups in which a mentor was assigned showed significantly fewer mean number of disciplinary infractions. In contrast to what was hypothesized (H3), no significant difference was found between the same-race group and the cross-race group in terms of mean number of disciplinary referrals. Similarly, although findings indicated that the mean GPA scores for both the same-race group ($M = 2.355, SD = 0.6419$) and the cross-race group ($M = 2.280, SD = 0.5750$) were significantly different from the control group ($M = 1.358, SD = .6571$), indicating that both groups in which a mentor was assigned showed significantly higher mean GPA scores, the Tukey post hoc test indicated that the same-race group did not significantly differ from the cross-race group. As such, findings did

not provide support for the hypothesis (H3) that there would be a significant difference in terms of mean GPA and number of disciplinary infractions between students who were assigned a mentor of the same race (e.g., African American student matched to an African American mentor) and those who were in groups assigned a cross-race mentor (e.g., African American student matched to either a White or Hispanic mentor).

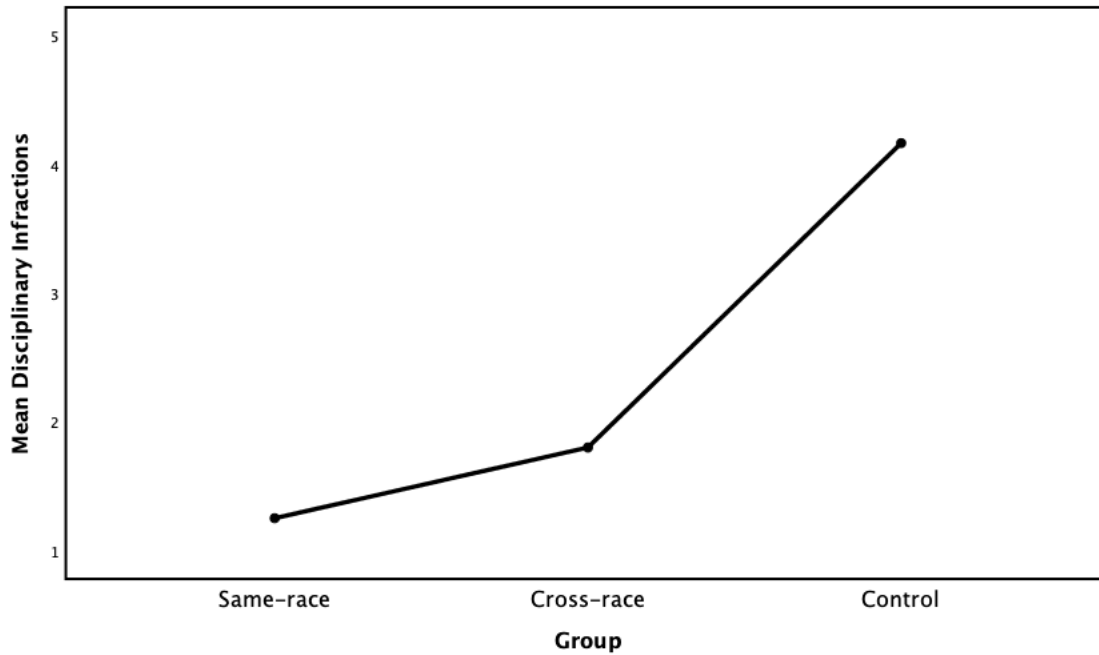


Figure 5. Means plot (One-way ANOVA) of disciplinary infractions by group.

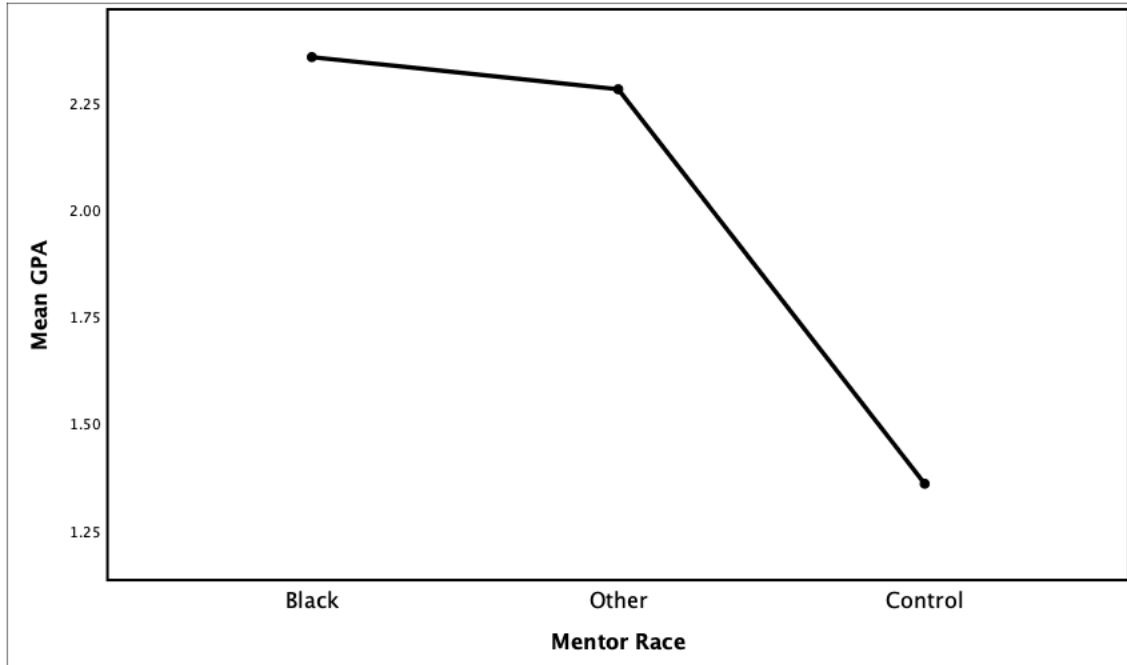


Figure 6. Means plot (One-way ANOVA) of GPA by group.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of the Groups by Mentor Race

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Discipline			
Same-race Mentor	20	1.25	1.74
Cross-race Mentor	10	1.80	2.82
Control Group	12	4.17	3.79
Total	42	2.21	2.94
GPA			
Same-race Mentor	20	2.36	0.64
Cross-race Mentor	10	2.28	0.58
Control Group	12	1.36	0.66
Total	42	2.05	0.76

Table 7. One-Way Analysis of Variance of Discipline and GPA of Groups by Mentor Race

	SS	df	MS	F	<i>p</i>
Discipline					
Between Groups	66.06	2	33.027	4.488	<.05*
Within Groups	287.02	39	7.359		
Total	353.07	41			
GPA					
Between Groups	8.13	2	4.065	10.192	<.05*
Within Groups	15.56	39	.399		
Total	23.69	41			

* $P < .05$

Summary

Although findings indicated significant differences between the groups as a whole and that the students assigned a same-race mentor had a higher mean GPA and a fewer number of disciplinary infractions than did the cross-race group ($M = 2.280$, $SD = 0.5750$), findings suggested that significant differences, in terms of mean GPA and mean number of disciplinary infractions, exist only between both mentor groups and the control group. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were found to be significant. Still, findings did not support H3 as no significant differences were found between the same-race and cross-race groups in either mean GPA or number of disciplinary referrals. As such, findings suggest that although being assigned a mentor was associated with better outcomes, the race of said mentor may not have a significant effect.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine if mentoring had a significant effect on the academics and discipline of middle school African American boys. Students participating in the Male Call mentoring group were compared to a control group of boys who have no mentor. Students' GPA and discipline were compared to determine if greater outcomes were found between groups (mentor vs. non mentor) and within groups (same race vs cross race mentor). In this chapter we will discuss the findings of the study and how this compared to the research, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

Hypotheses 1 (H1) suggested that students participating in the Male Call mentoring group would achieve higher GPA scores than students not receiving mentoring. The results of this study confirm this hypothesis to be accurate as the ANOVA yielded scores at $p < .05$. Students engaged in mentoring did have overall better grades than students who had no mentor. Hypothesis 2 (H2) suggested that student participating in Male Call would have less disciplinary referrals than students who did not have a mentor. ANOVA testing again provided support that mentoring would have positive effects on the discipline of students who participated in the mentoring group ($p < .05$). Hypothesis 3 (H3) suggested that Male Call participants with a same-race mentor would have a greater GPA and fewer disciplinary referrals than students who had a cross-race mentor. Results of ANOVA and Turkey HSD found no significant effects based on the race of the mentor. Although the resulting data did show some gains of having a same-race mentor versus a cross-race mentor, these scores were not high enough to be deemed as significant.

Discussion

Research by Simoes & Alarcao (2014) suggests that mentors provide mentees with trust, companionship and empathy. Many African American boys lack the nurturing relationships that can be provided by mentors who meet their mistakes with open arms and provide them with direction. Just one positive and significant mentor can provide adolescent boys with the tools needed to have a positive transition to adulthood (Spencer et al, 2010). Male Call mentors sought to assist its members in improving their academics and discipline.

Academics

Mentored youth are often more academically engaged than those that do not have a mentor (Sykes, Gioviano, & Piquero, 2014). This was evident in this research. In previous years, the majority of these students had just completed enough work to get by (minimum passing grade). Through mentorships, students established higher goals (Coller & Kuo, 2014) as they sought to achieve increase grades and lower discipline. Mentors praised their group members and encouraged those who did not quite meet the mark. Where boys often hide their academic interests (Meijis et al, 2010), Male Call members openly shared their improvements with their mentor and other participants. Members challenged each other to complete all assigned classwork and to stay out of trouble. Mentors commented that they were amazed by how the simple act of competition and a field trip could encourage boys to make so much more effort than they had made previously. This study confirms the research that mentoring has a positive effect on the academic efforts of boys. An extension of this would be motivating students through a reward system. While these factors are often viewed separately, a combination of mentoring, praise, and rewards proved to be beneficial in this study.

Discipline

It is unlikely that parents send their children to school to disrupt the classroom. Most parents instruct their children to behave, but some students lack the reinforcement to comply with these requests. Decision making for adolescent boys becomes challenging as their focus shifts to peer influences (Jamison, Wilson, & Ryan, 2014). Adolescent boys are at high risk of behavioral problems, absenteeism, and school dropout (Teunissen et al, 2011) partially because they believe that school is a place to have fun rather than learn. The concept of adolescent boys is that dominant and aggressive behavior helps them gain popularity (Jamison, Wilson, & Ryan, 2014). Male Call mentors worked with their students to defy the concept that boys are unable to behave appropriately. Most participants made significant improvements in their behavior while in the program. Teachers invested in student efforts by utilizing mentors to counsel students when behaviors began to get out of line. This teamwork allowed mentors to refocus students' efforts towards academics. There were some instances where certain behaviors could not be reframed but Male Call members progressed well overall. Multiple Male Call members ended the school year with zero disciplinary referrals where in previous years they had multiple referrals. This study confirms that mentoring does have positive effects on the discipline of students. Again, the addition of praise and reward by field studies further encouraged students to avoid disciplinary referrals and exhibit positive behaviors.

Mentor Race

Gaddis (2012) found that minorities typically have lower levels of cross-racial trust. This research sought to confirm these theories by posing that students with same-race mentors would have higher grades and lower disciplinary referrals than students who had a cross-race mentor. Collier & Kuo (2014) posed that mentors of the same race would better understand the mentee

experiences and promote empathy. While this may or may not be an accurate concept, this research did not find a significant difference in student outcomes based on the race of their mentor. Groups A and C (both with non-African American mentors) ended the program with GPAs similar to the groups lead by African American mentors. Students in Group A, led by a White teacher, ended the school year with only two disciplinary referrals. The number was equal to the efforts of groups B and F, both with same race mentors. This does not suggest that the students did not benefit from having a mentor of the same race, but that the race of the mentor did not necessarily exclude the group from achieving academically or behaviorally. The race of the mentor was not as significant as the relationship that the mentor had with the group members. A review of these findings based on grades, discipline and the comments of mentors suggest that positive relationships with African American boys has a greater influence on their motivation and performance than the race of their mentor. Mentors were able to de-escalate students when they were upset, praise them for having a good day, and empower them to stay focused. Regardless of the mentor' race, these factors provided mentored students with the motivation to perform in the classroom and exhibit positive behaviors.

Implications

Previous research suggests that mentoring has a positive effect on student outcomes, particularly for African American boys. As adolescence is described an identity crisis stage for all youth (Erickson), mentoring would be beneficial to all that fall within this age group regardless of gender or race. This research, however, focuses on the achievement of African American boys and how mentoring might have positive effects on their grades and discipline. This section will address the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications made from this study. We will also discuss how Christian worldview informs the findings.

Theoretical

Previous research supports the efforts of mentoring in assisting students with their grades and discipline. This research adds the influence of praise and reward in motivating boys. Male Call students encouraged each other to obtain higher grades and less disciplinary referrals. Members were celebrated at the conclusion of each month for obtaining a grade of C and above in each class. A grade of C was used as an average grade range to encourage the students to avoid settling for a D or F average. Although some students might achieve grades lower than a C, the program seeks to push the boys to challenge themselves academically. Points were awarded to individual students who were divided into groups of five members. Each group (A – F), strived for higher points and a reward from their mentor. This research used praise and reward as a tool to motivate Male Call members to perform academically and to avoid disciplinary referrals. Students received extra motivation and assistance from peers and mentors when they didn't meet the academic or behavioral goal. For this reason, the administration and teachers should make attempts to infuse consistent praise into their academic routine. Since minority boys are often the subject of lower standardized tests scores and higher discipline, targeting this subgroup might allow for improvements in these areas.

Empirical

This study reviewed the effects of mentoring on boys' grades and discipline but found that the underlined benefit of mentorships was found in relationships that were built between mentor and mentees. Students experienced gains in the GPA and discipline regardless of the race of their mentor. While having a same-race mentor could benefit students in the areas of sympathy and empathy, the care and consistency of an adult proved to be the determining factor of student outcomes. Educators and stakeholders should make sincere efforts at establishing

these types of relationships with students. As discussed, positive relationships are not always experienced in the home for various reasons, but this does not exclude students from the need of relationship with a caring adult. Recognizing when a student is sad, celebrating their accomplishments, and encouraging them to make improvements in areas of weakness are all characteristic of a meaningful relationship. Administrator and counselors are not excluded from these relationships as children often idolize individuals of authority. Adults must invest time in the interests of students and have in depth discussions about their feelings. Since adolescents are experiencing a host of emotions and hormonal changes, these conversations are vital to their well-being. Acceptance does not always have to come from peers. Students can acquire belongingness, esteem and self-actualization from positive adult figures.

Practical

Since positive relationships through mentoring have shown to be effective in this study, imagine if every student had this experience. Often schools assign students to a homeroom or advisory period, but seldom is this time dedicated to the interests of students. Each student is unique in their home life, special interests, and future ambitions. Investing in these situations helps to build meaningful relationships with students that will provide adults with tools to assist students in their ambitions. These tools might include ways to manage situations, methods of communication, steps to pursue goals. Schools should dedicate a segment of each day or even each week for mentorships at school. Teachers, counselors, and administrators would each be assigned a group of students to mentor. This designated time would be dedicated to having meaningful discussions with students about grades, behavior, personal interests, and any struggles that might be enduring. Every student in the building would have an adult figure to confide in when there is a need and to give them pats on the backs for a job well done. Praise in

important in that it decreases student disruptive and off-task behaviors (Floress, Jenkins, Reinke, & McKnown, 2018). Praise assists adolescents in feeling that their efforts to achieve academically and behave are not in vain. Long term goals are often not enough to motivate students to make consistent efforts to be positive daily. Many students, especially boys, would benefit from an extra push to excel in the classroom and to feel accomplished. Policy makers and educational stakeholders should invest in the mental health of students by allotting time for every student to experience mentorships. Studies have already shown that often African American boys lack the resources to have a mentor (Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, 2009) but would definitely benefit from an adult role model (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011). Not only will mentoring provide these students with a sense of school belonging and decreased truancy (Curran & Wexler, 2017), but mentoring also provides emotional and psychological support, social competence, as well as academic and career readiness (DuBois et al, 2011). These characteristics are necessary for the wellness and achievement of our youth.

Christian worldview

In Proverbs 22:6 (ESV) God instructs us to train up a child in the way he should go so when he gets older, he will not depart from it. Parents and educators have this responsibility. Though often life stressors prevent us from investing meaningful time with our children, we must acknowledge that there are multiple factors in society that might cause our children to go astray. Violence, substance abuse, Peer pressures, and environmental hazards are but a few of the obstacles that today's youth face. Adults must model proper behaviors for children and encourage them to make good decisions. If these values are instilled at an early age, children are more likely to model the behaviors that they were taught. Deuteronomy 6:7 (NIV) instructs us to

talk about our children when we are sitting at home, when we rise each morning and when we awake each morning. Our children should be our crown jewels that we instill great values within. Unfortunately, this is not the reality for all children who are often faced with environmental and domestic hazards. Non parental adults then have the responsibility to model positive behaviors for children. Proverbs 1:5 (ESV) instructs us to let the wise hear and increase in learning so they may provide others with guidance. Teachers, counselors, administrators, and other educational stakeholders are in a perfect position to provide this type of guidance as children spend more time in school than at home. As this study found that boys need mentorships to excel academically and display positive behaviors, the Bible tell us in Psalms 8:2 (NIV) to praise our children so a stronghold may be established against enemies. These enemies may appear in the form of delinquent peers, exposure to toxic substances, and any other factors that may distract the progress of a child. Children seek love and praise. If this attention is not satisfied by parents and adult models, children will seek that attention elsewhere. The lack of attention might encourage children to conform to negative models to obtain acceptance. Mentors in the form of positive adult figures provide adolescents with guidance that God intended for his children to have. To promote a Christian attitude, adults must model the behavior that is expected of children and not allow society at large to dictate their futures. Mentors therefore serve as servants of God who increase the flock by instilling values and morals into children who might be distracted by ungodly acts. This is a responsibility held by all of God's followers to bring others into the Kingdom by showing them the way of the righteous (Psalms 1: 1 – 2).

Delimitations and Limitations

This research was limited to the effects of mentoring on adolescent black boys and their progress in academics and behavior. Minority boys in the middle school too often score lower on standardized assessments and accumulate more disciplinary referrals than any other subgroup. African American boys are often deemed as at-risk simply because of the statistics surrounding their gender and race. This subgroup is often described as uninterested and unmotivated to excel in school which inadvertently leads to them becoming successful adult men. This research sought to defy adverse statistics by showing that African American boys need positive relationships (i.e. mentors) to assist them with their maturation and positive decision making. Adolescence is consistently described as a crucial age in maturation therefore the middle school was an excellent place to conduct this research. As hypothesized, healthy relationships in the form of mentorships have positive effects on the academics and behaviors of adolescent African American boys. The results of this study may, however, have different effects for a different group of students. This research focused on mentoring boys though various types of mentoring programs do exist. A review of other types of mentoring groups may be beneficial for an extended study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Considering the findings and limitations of this study, additional research is needed on the topic of mentoring and its effects on student outcomes. Though not defined in this study, normalizing the home life of students might have had a significant effect on the results. Participants in this study derived from multiple home situations. Some were from single-parent homes guided by a mother while others lived with a grandparent in the absence of a parent. Some of the participants lived in a home with an incarcerated parent, while others lived in a

stable two-parent home. These daily stressors may or may not have had an adverse effect on the motivation and achievement of the students. Normalizing the home life of the participants might produce different outcomes in an extended study.

Another extension of this research would be to include other minorities and females. Although African American males often receive most of the negative attention, several other subgroups struggle at least in the area of academics. A much larger study would include various subgroups of students to include females and other racial/ethnic groups. It would even be interesting to examine what factors contribute to the high achievement of students based on their gender and racial/ethnic group. An ANOVA, similar to the design used in this study, could be utilized to compare these means as well.

Summary

This research studied the effects of mentoring on the academic achievement and behavior of black male students at Prince William Middle School. Specifically, it observed the performance of students who had scored poorly of the SOL assessment and students who had obtained two or more disciplinary referrals the previous school year. A mentoring group, Male Call, was established to provide young men with the motivation to excel academically and to stay out of trouble. The participants of the study each had some academic and behavioral concerns which made them ideal candidates for this program. Male mentors worked with smaller groups of five students to develop trusting relationships that might encourage the students to perform in the classroom and avoid discipline problems. A subgroup of boys who had no mentor were compared to the participants of Male Call in the areas of GPA and discipline. The results of this study found that students who participated in Male Call, achieved significantly higher grades and less disciplinary referrals than students who did not take

advantage of the mentorship. This research did not prove that having a same-race mentor would yield greater outcomes than having a cross-race mentor. In conclusion, having a healthy relationship (mentor) with African American boys yield more significant outcomes for the population regardless of the race of the mentor. The benefits of having a male figure to relate to, an adult to confide in and someone to push the boys to do well were all benefits of the mentor relationship. Although other adult figures may be available to students, mentors make sincere effort to invest in the interests and ambitions of students. Schools would benefit from infusing a mentoring piece into the culture of the environment so that all students, especially African American boys, may take advantage of the incentives that mentoring has to offer. These incentives might increase the effort level of all students and potentially reduce other conflicts that may exist in schools. Improving these areas might assist schools in producing prominent youth who are willing and able to secure the futures our next generation.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval 4155.031320: The Effects of Mentoring on Student Outcomes

Dear Leroy York,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University **IRB**. This **approval** is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the **IRB**. The forms for these cases are attached to this **approval** email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

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

Your study involves surveying or interviewing minors, or it involves observing the public behavior of minors, and you will participate in the activities being observed.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this **approval** letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Your **IRB**-approved, stamped consent form is also attached. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the **IRB**, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office