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An Evaluation of the Effect of a Mentoring Program on Eighth-Grade Students

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An Evaluation of the Effect of a Mentoring Program on
Eighth-Grade Students

by
Khalifa Stanford

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Khalifa Stanford under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Statement of Original Work

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Khalifa Stanford
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July 29, 2016
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Abstract

An Evaluation of the Effect of a Mentoring Program on Eighth-Grade Graduation Rates of Minority Male Students in a South Florida Middle School. Khalifa Stanford, 2016: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education. Keywords: Graduation, Males, Mentoring, Middle School, Minority Group Students, Programs

The purpose of this applied dissertation study was to determine the effect of a mentoring program, the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, on eighth-grade graduation rates of minority male students at one middle school in South Florida. An achievement gap exists between minority and majority male students in this school district indicating a need for an intervention program for those minority males at risk of dropping out of school. Such a program would serve minority males by providing a positive role model in their lives. The 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project was utilized at this middle school in South Florida to assist minority students in forming positive relationships as they transitioned to high school.

For this study, 20 parents and 20 mentors from one middle school were surveyed about their satisfaction with the program. Students were surveyed about their perceptions of the program and its impact. Students' graduation rates were obtained from official school records and broken down by ethnicity. Students and parents were encouraged to continue their participation in the mentoring program, which provided the participants with additional resources in and out of school.

The results of the study revealed improvement in graduation rates among minority male eighth-grade students enrolled in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project as compared to minority male eighth-grade students who did not participate in the mentoring program. Parents and mentors reported that the program assisted the students in achieving better academic and conduct grades in school. The study demonstrated the positive impact of the project on eighth-grade minority males in one middle school in Florida.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Society has a reciprocal role to play in helping male students achieve success (Stover, 2006). Since 2011, high school graduation rates have increased by 4.2 percent for Latinos, 3.7 percent for African Americans and 2.6 percent for European American students (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2013). The national high school graduation rate is high due to various programs that have been implemented at the local, state, and national levels. Research has also shown, however, that a racial difference in suspension rates in schools has risen dramatically since the 1970s (Elias, 2013). Faber (2015) stated that educators, parents, and mentors must continue to search for ways to ensure that all students receive a rich, well-rounded education that will help them to be productive citizens in society.

Hardy (2006) found the dropout rates for minority students have been higher than majority students on a global scale. Between 1972 and 2004, the status dropout rate was lowest among European American students and highest among Latin American students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Although dropout rates are shrinking, there remains a significant difference between many majority and minority groups in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). During the 1970s and 1980s, dropout rates declined in schools among African and Latin American ethnic groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). The total population of eighth-grade student membership in the school district in which this study was conducted was 2,389 White; 6,458 African American; and 17,953 Latin American. The total number of students who graduated from high school was 19,677, and students in this school district during 2015 made adequate yearly progress at 62%, which was a component of the No

Child Left Behind Act. However, in this school district, the graduation rates of minority male students were lower than those of majority male students in middle schools.

The graduation rates of minority male students from public schools in this school district have been very low (Florida Department of Education, 2010). Located in Florida, this school district is one of the largest public school districts in the United States and has a large minority population. At the time of this study, it served 218,535 Latin American students and 111,236 African American students, and according to school system records, half of the residents of the county are foreign born, and 68% speak a language other than English in their homes. This school district aims to raise the academic performance of students, as measured by national standards, and plans to accomplish this goal with the support of academic enhancement programs, such as mentoring (Florida Department of Education, 2010).

Previous research (Pluviose, 2008) supported mentoring to assist minority students in forming positive relationships and making the right transitions as they enter high school. One response to combat the dropout rates among minorities in South Florida was to initiate the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, a dropout prevention, mentoring program committed to closing the minority male achievement (access) gap. The project has guided minority male students along a carefully charted path through grades K-12 and college. Also, it has enabled students to attain other postsecondary credentials and has increased their employability in high-skills jobs with better wages within high demand industries throughout the nation (Pluviose, 2008).

The 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project adopts the African proverb that states, "It takes a village to raise a child." The vision statement's goal is, "Each minority

male student will graduate from high school, go to college, vocational school, or the military, and be positioned to become a contributing and self-sustaining member of society." The mission statement is to intervene in the lives of minority males and help them to achieve success. The goal of the program remains the same in this local school district: to assist minority male students by focusing their attention on healthy living, responsibility, respect, and positive goals.

The 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project. The project was founded in March 1993 by Congresswoman Frederica S. Wilson, who was serving on the local school board, and who realized that minority boys in the public school system needed help. These boys were being incarcerated, entering the drug trade, and dropping out of school at a rate 25% higher than that of majority boys (Florida Department of Education, 2010). The goal of the U.S. Congress and the school board members was to address these problems. Male residents of the school district were challenged to intervene in the lives of these minority students by serving as mentors. The program focuses on mentoring and lays the groundwork for early interventions in response to the problems male students tend to encounter when attending high school in this county.

Originally titled 500 African American Male Role Models of Excellence, it was created to boost the self-image, social skills, and academic performance of young minority males by motivating them to interact with successful males in their communities. The program was endorsed by the local school board and in 1994, because of the great participation of mentors in the program during its first year, the name was changed to 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project. The key elements of the program were the ability to provide students with a wider exposure to life, namely access to

professional, African American males (6,000 volunteers who act as father figures), out-of-town trips, teen summits, employment and career counseling, *Take an Apprentice to Work Day,* and police and youth conferences (Davis, 2009). The result was that student participants did not just graduate, but went on to higher education (Davis, 2009).

The goals of The 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project are designed to prepare the youth "with the knowledge, skills, and experiences that will enable them to thrive in mainstream America, while instilling in them self-confidence and self-respect" (Davis, 2009). Specific goals include (a) placing at-risk boys in supportive relationships with positive and successful men in the community whom they can emulate, (b) educating at-risk boys about the consequences of succumbing to societal pitfalls and exposing them to positive alternatives, and (c) providing an infrastructure that will empower adult community role models to assume responsibility for preparing young men to deal with challenges and struggles that threaten their success. Participants chosen are minority males between the ages of 9 and 19 who have promise but are at risk because of negative behaviors and/or socio-economic conditions. Participants are generally being raised without benefit of a father or positive role model, and they are referred by school principals, counselors, teachers, and/or parents. The program lists 26 components, which include exposure to the community and emphasis on identity, and which teach young boys about healthy living, responsibility, respect, and attaining goals. The program also teaches young boys to respect law enforcement, the law, women, school officials, and parents.

Background and justification. Mentoring programs have shown that every member of the community has a stake in the education of all students (Stover, 2006). The

5000 Role Models of Excellence Project helps students by providing the necessary support, partnering with community leaders, identifying key allies, and, most importantly, providing mentors for a generation of young men who need the support and guidance so they can be successful in life. Many prominent Americans are involved in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Mentoring Project, which serves 6,792 students in 89 schools (23 elementary, 33 middle, and 33 senior high) in this school system. According to Stover (2006), programs like the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project have been developed to respond to the rapid changes taking place in U.S. education. The school system may face greater challenges as the number of ethnic-minority students increases.

The researcher used a quantitative design to study how mentoring programs are used at the middle school level to increase the graduation rate of minority male students at one school in Florida. The rationale behind the use of a quantitative design was to gain an understating of the underlying reasons for the achievement gap between minority and majority male students and motivations behind mentoring programs in public schools. The instruments were used to collect answers to survey and focus questions and numerical data with which to test those theories. The researcher studied participants by asking questions that could not be answered with numerical data and that allowed analysis in the context of the setting and the participants' characteristics. Numerical analysis was expected to render results more generalizable than those of a strictly qualitative study. A quantitative approach allowed the researcher to analyze the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, which provided recommendations on how to improve eighth-grade graduation rates of minority male students.

Poverty has a huge impact on male students who attend public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Nevertheless, these students have the right to receive a free and high-quality education, and educators have the challenge of meeting their needs. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2009), there is a direct correlation between poverty and the dropout rate of minority students, and poverty rates are highest among minority students in urban school districts, with the highest poverty rates being those of African American and Latin American students (Hardy, 2006). Poverty in urban school districts results in high mobility rates among minority students. Forty-six percent of students in urban districts, 34% of students in suburban districts, and 28% of students in rural districts have changed schools between the years 2000-2009 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 continues to have an impact on minority students. Although this federal legislation tried to ensure every child's receipt of a high-quality education, minority students often are not making academic progress as it was defined in this legislation. Test scores and results are separated by subgroups and those with waivers; progress is measured by each state in the country. Many educators have doubts about standardized testing, but they are required to follow the mandates of federal law despite these doubts (Ravitch, 2010). The NCLB act expired in 2007 and districts are currently creating assessments to comply with Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The ending of this political movement in education opens the door for new legislation with the passing of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed in December, 2015.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization was

considered in Congress during 2015. The nation was at a crossroad with two different versions of the ESEA bill, one sponsored by the Senate and the other by the House of Representatives. For example, The Every Child Achieves Act put forth by the Senate would restore the responsibility for determining how to use federally required tests for accountability purposes. States would be required to use the tests but would have the ability to determine the weight of these tests. The ESEA would also provide economic assistance and expand support for schools, students, parents, and educators (Samuels, 2015). The law was finally passed in both houses of Congress, and President Obama signed the ESSA bill into law on December 10, 2015 (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). This bill had bipartisan support and reauthorizes the ESEA. The new law was supported by parents, educators, communities, and students from across America (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Across the nation, schools have made tremendous gains, yet many public schools have suffered restructuring as punishment for underperformance in some areas. The NCLB Act of 2001 provided a higher quality of education for all students, but many minority students continue to struggle academically (Stover, 2006). Stover (2006) noted that numerous educators in the county in which this study was conducted believed that the NCLB Act of 2001 did not meet the needs of all students and that it was fundamentally flawed. NCLB created an immense category of failing schools and gave affluent students a substantial advantage over those who were impoverished (Toch, 2011). This legislation also held all schools accountable to essentially the same standards including those schools that faced added challenges of overcoming disadvantaged students' educational deficits (Toch, 2011).

As educators continue to analyze the educational systems of U.S. school districts, several barriers hinder some minority groups from achieving success in society (Stover, 2006). Mentors have challenged educators to help urban U.S. school districts' minority students to achieve academic success comparable to that of their majority peers (Stover, 2006). Educators must find ways to educate all students, and mentoring programs are found to be useful (Stover, 2006). Mentoring can lead to higher graduation rates and help male students experience success after they leave high school and, as Stover (2006) noted, success is aided by the fact that mentoring programs ascribe to the belief that every member of the community has a stake in the education of all students.

The research problem. The national high school graduation rate for 2013 was an average of 81.4 percent (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2013). According to the U.S. Department of Education, in the 2012-13 school year nationwide, Blacks graduated at a 70.7% rate and Hispanics graduated at a 75.2% rate. However, Steirhiem (2008) reported that despite the availability of mentoring programs, minority male students in this district are graduating at a lower rate than their majority male counterparts (48% vs. 73%). According to Howard (2015), school personnel in educational settings need more equitable and just learning environments for all students. Many school districts are taking a closer look at disciplinary data to examine race and gender trends and how this impacts graduation rates of minority students (Howard, 2015).

Within the Florida school district of this applied dissertation study, during the 2011-2012 school year, the graduation rate of African Americans was 64%, Latin Americans 72%, and European Americans 83% (Florida Department of Education, 2010). However, during the 2014-2015 school year, the dropout rates were as follows:

African Americans 4.1%, Latin Americans 2.3%, and 2.1% for European Americans

(Florida Department of Education, 2015). Overall, the graduation rates in Florida

increased by 5% during the 2014-2015 school year (Florida Department of Education,

2015). The program was assessed during the 2014-2015 academic school year. What is

wanted by this school district is an increase in graduation rates for minority students,

indicating equality among majority and minority students, rather than the disparity shown

now. The graduation rates of eighth-grade minority male students were reviewed for this

study. Educators hope students' achievement of short-term educational goals will bring

about policy changes that will hold legislators accountable for addressing this urban crisis

in the next 5 years (Pluviose, 2008). If the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project is

shown to be effective in the local school district, members of the U.S. Congressional

Black Caucus aim to promote it across the United States to end the nation's dropout crisis

for the sake of African American male students who attend public schools (Pluviose,

2008).

  Deficiencies in the evidence. Students within the researcher's organization were

provided with the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project to meet some of their needs.

At the time of this study, however, no evaluation of the program had determined the

effectiveness of its implementation or its impact on the minority students' experiences or

graduation rates. The researcher hoped this study would benefit minority male students in

Florida. The program was intended to have an effect on Latin American and African

American male students in public schools. The research of Frank (2011) and Rhodes

(2002) supported mentoring programs for minority male students in public schools.

Rhodes (2002) argued that many successful mentoring programs have assisted minority

males for several decades, yet Frank (2011) noted a lack of evidence of successful

mentoring programs in southern Florida public schools. Rhodes (2002) reviewed the

impact of mentoring programs for minority male students in middle school and found

little prior related research. Frank (2011) suggested that middle school is a critical area in

which students should be supported on the academic, emotional, and social levels. The

researcher explored the area of mentoring programs to see how they affected minority

male students at the middle school level and whether they improved the successful

completion of school.

   Audience. The intended audience for this study was middle and high school

educational leaders, school counselors, teachers, parents, teacher-training programs,

designers of intervention programs for middle school students, administrators, and

community-based organizations (Boy and Girl Scouts of America). Many community

organizations often partner with schools to promote the achievement and success of

children. Access and opportunity to partake in mentoring programs were determining

factors of the success and graduation rates of minority male students. Mentoring

programs are often implemented by educators to assist students with academic

achievement in schools.

Definition of Terms

   For the purpose of this applied dissertation, the following definitions were used:

   Community. This term refers to the location of the school and the surrounding

environment, including industries, businesses, and other organizations (Somers, Owens,

& Piliawsky, 2008).

   Dropout. This term refers to a student who withdraws from school for any of

several reasons without transferring to another school, home education program or adult education program, as defined by the Florida Department of Education (2002).

Mentoring. This term refers to a program that supports minority students in public schools, such as The 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project which was founded in 1993 (Florida Department of Education, 2002). Mentoring involves pairing a student with someone who can provide him with a positive role model. In this case, mentoring assists minority male students in this local school district by focusing their attention on healthy living, responsibility, respect, and positive goals.

Minority. For this study, a student of this type is one who is African American or Latin American and enrolled in a public school.

School connection. This term refers to the association through which students use various skills to communicate effectively with all stakeholders to be productive in school (Balfanz, 2011).

Status dropout rate. This term refers to the rate at which 16-year-old students leave school (Florida Department of Education, 2002).

Student involvement. This term refers to students' participation in school activities (Somers et al., 2008).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the effect of a mentoring program upon graduation rates of minority male students between the ages of 13 and 15 years in one middle school in one Florida school district, during the 2014-2015 school year. The program utilized the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project and focused on variables identified in the literature as key to successful student graduation. For example,

Ramirez and Carpenter (2009) found academic achievement, leadership, and community involvement to be variables that affect graduation rates of various groups of students in large, urban school districts. The 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project provides students with strategies for improving academic readiness for the postsecondary level based on an annual analysis of the middle school graduation rates of students enrolled in the project.

The site of the applied dissertation study was a Title I middle school with an enrollment of 1,630 students. Title I is a federally funded program that provides assistance to schools with high percentages of economically disadvantaged children and provides supplemental funding to meet the needs of these students. The study conducted by the researcher concentrated on determining the effect of the project on minority male students from eighth grade to the high school level. Both Latin American and African American students were enrolled in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project.

The research setting was a middle school in a fast-growing metropolis in Florida. The school was established in 1955 with an open campus, and the current design includes 17 portable classrooms. The school meets requirements for Secondary School Reform (Florida Department of Education, 2002) and, in conjunction with the Museum of Science and Planetarium Magnet Program, is a magnet school for science, engineering, and technology. Sixty percent of the parent population can neither read nor write in English, and more than 50% of the students come from single-parent households (Florida Department of Education, 2015). The researcher teaches social science at the school.

The current principal served in the capacity of assistant principal at several schools within the county before assuming the role of principal in the researcher's school

in 2011. The principal has been at the school for the past 4 years. Several programs initiated by the principal, which include I-Prep Math and Cambridge Academy, are geared to assist minority male students and to help prepare them for the future. Most of the programs implemented are inquiry-based and include hands-on activities that are included in the CCSS.

Community involvement included activities that took place throughout the school year. Students attended four field trips: the county jail (to witness the results of crime activity), a hospital (to meet doctors and nurses and to discuss disease prevention), an induction ceremony at a major hotel, and Sun Life Stadium (to meet professional athletes). Each Wednesday, students also participated in meetings with their mentors and were required to "dress for success" by wearing a shirt and tie. Students were also rewarded every 9 weeks/four times a year for good behavior and academics in school. The program provided mentors and volunteers from this urban community to guide participants from boyhood to manhood. Additionally, district-wide conferences for students were held throughout the school year to provide exposure to local and national role-model mentors from urban communities.

The project incorporated community service, which took place at the school where many of the students volunteered with the Environmentalist Club and helped pick up trash for deposit in recycling bins at the school. These students were encouraged to participate in this club so they would gain community service hours for high school graduation, and they were proactive in keeping the school environment clean. Also, students were encouraged to give to the collection for the local homeless shelter. Some of the items collected were food and hygiene products. At the end of the school year,

students were recognized for their efforts with these community service projects at the middle school graduation ceremony.

      The previous superintendent supported the creation of the project about 20 years ago (Burkett & Jester, 2013). The 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project holds an annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Unity Breakfast, which provides minority boys with money to further their postsecondary education. The 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project receives about $560,000 from the local school board each year (Burkett & Jester, 2013). The goals of the project are to ensure that minority males involved in the project are equipped with resources and experiences that will enable them to thrive in today's society.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Over the years, there has been a decrease in the academic achievement of minority male students in public schools (Frank, 2011). The disproportionate number of African American children failing in schools has been an issue of concern for several decades (Rhodes, 2002). Hardy (2006) suggested that support for minority male students in public schools will result in their success later in life. Adams (2015) states that 60 percent to 70 percent of students become disengaged in 7th and 8th grades at the middle school level. The study found that 90 percent of students who participate in this mentoring program in middle school enter high school on the right track. The areas of concern that must be addressed on behalf of minority students in public schools include academic enhancement programs, disparities in student performance, school quality, school connections, and cultural connections.

Academic Enhancement Programs

The attention given by the U.S. Congress to the educational needs of minority students in the United States increased between 2010 and 2011 (Toch, 2011). For example, at the time of this study, the U.S. Congress was currently reviewing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a bill signed into law in 1965 by President L.B. Johnson, which provides support to schools in the form of federal grants for school text and library books, special education centers, and scholarships to address the needs of low-income students (Florida Department of Education, 2002). Many other successful programs have aimed at minority students, particularity disadvantaged male students (Viadero, 2007). These new programs focus on assisting minority and economically disadvantaged children in public education (Samuels, 2015), which enables

them to achieve more in school, making it possible for them to obtain a postsecondary education. The programs are designed to reach adolescent minority male students in innovative ways that combine the efforts of parents, schools, and members of the community to set those students on a path to academic success (Toch, 2011).

Adolescence is a critical time of exploration and wonder, especially for students in the middle grades (Viadero, 2007). According to Fleming (2011), students need time in middle school to improve academics and attitudes so they can be successful in high school and postsecondary schools. Because adolescent students are at a very sensitive and impressionable age, care must be taken by their teachers. Educators see positive role models as crucial in fostering a good attitude about the future in minority male students (Toch, 2011).

According to the Florida Department of Education (2002), academic enhancement programs, such as the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, which has over 6,000 volunteers who dedicate their time and resources to the mentoring program to assist minority males, and the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, support quality standards and have the potential to benefit all students who attend public schools. The 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project connects young men of color with good role models (Steirhiem, 2008). The program services minority males ages 9 through 19, who are recommended for the program by the school principal, other educators, counselors, or parents. The program serves minority male students who are reared without a father figure in the home environment.

Some of the components of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project include conferences, summits, and symposiums. Students are taught about drug awareness, such

as alcohol, tobacco, and other drug products. Mentors and students are provided training throughout the year. Students are taught survival skills while in the program to help them live a better life. Spiritual and police conferences are provided to the students. Mentors are recognized annually by the program director. Various field trips to college campuses and correctional facilities are provided to the students in the program. An annual 5000 Role Models of Excellence scholarship breakfast is held each year to recognize and give scholarships to the top students who are graduating from high school (Florida Department of Education, 2002).

Although not part of this study, many academic enhancement programs are used for intervention purposes to support mentoring programs in Florida. Academic intervention programs are used in schools to assist minority children to achieve success. The *Quality Standards for Academic Intervention Programs* (Florida Department of Education, 2002), reflected educators' focus on quality and excellence in schools, and these educational programs are based on the mission, goals, and objectives of the state of Florida. Over the years, states have used academic enhancement programs to assist boys of color in improving their long-term outcomes, growth, and contributions to society (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). According to the Florida Department of Education (2002), many educational standards provide educators with a connection between effective academic interventions and improvement of graduation rates; the department created the *Quality Standards for Academic Intervention Programs* to be used for the benefit of all students in the state.

This United Way's Middle Grade Success Challenge Program is a middle school improvement project that helps to mentor students for career focused engagement in

schools (Adams, 2015). The goal of the program is to provide opportunities for participants to succeed in their pursuit of a college education, beginning before participants are eligible for college admission. Upward Bound is another program that serves about 700 universities, colleges, schools, and other agencies around the United States (Viadero, 2007). The Upward Bound program was established for low-income high school students in 1965 as part of the U.S. "war on poverty" (Dervarics, 2006, p. 12) and was designed to provide summer learning activities, mentoring, college counseling, jobs, and other services to minority students (Viadero, 2007). The aim of this mentoring program is to increase college-going rates among the Upward Bound program (Dervarics, 2006), which overwhelmingly benefits minority students from low-income families around the country in many urban areas. Many Upward Bound alumni are mentors who recruit minority students to participate in the program.

One program that has had a high success rate is the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, with three areas of concentration: academic preparation, acclimation involving parents, and financial concerns. The University of Wisconsin is one of the major institutions that assist with this program. The Pell Institute assists students before they enter college by offering tutoring and creating peer groups, which students can maintain after they get to school (Blankenship, 2010). The main objective of the Pell Institute is acclimation of students to the higher education environment.

Some institutions of higher learning, including the University of Wisconsin-Madison, have found success with a program called the PEOPLE Program (Pre-College Enrichment Opportunity Program for Learning Excellence). The University of

Wisconsin-Madison study was implemented in 1999, with some students enrolling in the program as early as elementary school. The program does not guarantee admission to the University of Wisconsin but offers workshops, summer programs, and other initiatives to assist minority students in becoming prepared for a postsecondary education. This enrichment program invests resources in students for years before they enter a postsecondary institution and then works within an extant system to assist struggling students while addressing problems that leave students unprepared for a postsecondary future (Blankenship, 2010).

Wyatt (2009) suggested that inner-city minority male students are more susceptible than the majority student population to criminal behavior, substance abuse, poor academic progress, and early sexual behavior. One program to assist inner-city males is The Brotherhood, a mentoring program created by a professional school counselor, which focuses on collaboration, leadership, and student advocacy (Wyatt, 2009). Using weekly meetings, a 30-week curriculum is followed that incorporates the American School Counselor Association standards. Hence, the academic enhancements programs are needed to implement the 30-week curriculum. This program assists minority male students in the areas of self-confidence, attitudes toward school, and academic achievement.

Another program used for academic enhancement in schools is Olszewski-Kubilius's (2006) Project Excite, a program of the Center for Talent Development. It was developed and implemented to address the gap in achievement between majority and minority students. The program provides sustained enrichment to Evanston gifted minority students. Project Excite selects 20 to 25 students on the basis of test

performance, classroom achievements, and educators' recommendations, and enrolls students in math and science enrichment courses in the Evanston (Illinois) Township High School program. Project Excite has raised the achievement of gifted minority students in schools throughout Illinois (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2006).

Still another program that has been used around the country is My Life My Power, founded in 2010 to combat many crises that harm today's youths (Puder, 2013). The program helps youths cope with bullying and intimidation in school. *My Life My Power Youth Workbook* (Puder, 2012) addresses a wide variety of other problems that children and teenagers confront daily in school and in their communities. For example, it teaches youths the importance of goal setting, mentoring, character building, and leadership to develop a positive mindset. The program takes students on a personal journey and self-exploration of themselves and helps them to create a road map for success to unlock their true potential in life (Puder, 2013, p. 19).

Like other relationships, youth-mentoring relationships can vary in closeness and duration in ways that have implications for their effectiveness. Whereas some mentoring relationships can be extraordinarily influential, others are only marginally helpful or even dissatisfying and hurtful (Rhodes, Reddy, & Grossman, 2005). Many U.S. youths are involved in school- or community-based volunteer mentoring programs each year, and the numbers are rising at an unprecedented rate (Rhodes, 2002). Federal data have been used to explore ways to coordinate with state and local governments to assist with youth and mentoring programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). A Nation at Risk was published in 1983, which reported the future of the country's international economic system with the need to reform public education (Mehta, 2015). This report, called for

changes to how children are taught in schools (Mehta, 2015). These factors also with other issues have impacted tutoring and mentoring for minority students in the last three decades. Rhodes (2002) anticipated annual increases in the number of involved students through 2014.

Research suggested that evidence impacting school intervention programs points to several factors that moderate relationships between mentoring and tutoring programs (Rhodes, 2002). Tutoring services increase desired behaviors, such as role-playing, academic achievement, and other social skills that are inclusive in many mentoring programs. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2001), empirical research has consistently shown that well-designed tutoring programs that use volunteers and other nonprofessionals as tutors can be effective in improving children's reading skills. Tutoring can lead to self-confidence, motivation, and change in peer behavior of cross-aged students (U.S. Department of Education, 2001, p. 5). Students with below-average reading skills who are tutored by volunteers show gains in reading skills over several years (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Fleming (2011) stated that various activities in mentoring can assist students with academic success in school, and students who participate in engaging activities for academic preparation in schools are linked to postsecondary success. Research has shown that students who are tutored and who participate in a mentoring program make greater gains than students who are not involved a mentoring program (Rhodes, 2002). Tutoring and mentoring both help students to strengthen their academic knowledge in school if they take advantage of these services (Rhodes, 2002; Fleming, 2011).

Achievement Gaps

Various inequities exist in the U.S. public educational system. These disparities mainly impact minority students in public education. Gender and race should be examined when reviewing the disparities in education. Change needs to take place in schools with regards to how African American and Latin American children are educated in schools. Action by parents, community activists, schools, educators, districts, counselors, and mentors must begin the process of ending disparities in schools that systemically fail to educate fully boys of color.

Multiple disparities between majority and minority groups have been related to student achievement and to the impact society has on minority male students (Ramirez & Carpenter, 2009). Many mentoring programs, such as the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project and Upward Bound, have challenged both districts and states to change their teaching methods. Many large states such as Florida use mentoring programs to focus on critical challenges and risk factors to create opportunities for boys and young men of color (Florida Department of Education, 2010). Mentoring programs are used to improve educational practices and to increase the graduation rates of African American male students (Samuels, 2008). The National Academies (as cited in Hua, 2011) reported that African Americans, Latin Americans, and Native Americans make up about 28% of the U.S. population, but these groups account for just 9% of college-educated Americans. Equalizing the performance of minority and majority students is not merely a matter of fairness; failure to access the minds of students, regardless of gender or ethnicity, limits the educational competitiveness of the United States with other nations (Hua, 2011). Both majority and minority students must be able to perform at the

same ability levels in school to reach their full potential.

The achievement gap between majority and minority students has existed since the 1960s in public education (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2006). According to Olszewski-Kubilius (2006), the College Board, The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, and the National Assessment of Education Progress have all released reports regarding the lack of achievement and representation of African Americans and Latin Americans in various educational programs. Olszewski-Kubilius (2006) pointed out that The National Assessment of Education Progress study showed the fastest growing population segment in the United States is Latin American. Hua (2011) also noted how Latin American students are making greater gains than African Americans in many educational settings. Latin American students in Grades 4 and 8 are scoring higher than African American students nationwide (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2006). On the other hand, European American students are making the most gains nationwide (Hua, 2011). Many programs around the country are trying to fix the achievement gap between minority and majority students in public schools. Some of these programs include early childhood, preschool, reform, and supplementary educational subprograms (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2006).

School districts all over the country are looking for the formula that will benefit all students. School improvement occurs incrementally because of sustained efforts over many years (Ravitch, 2010). Urban school districts are viewing research that supports achievement for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Educators, students, school board members, and parents must work together to prepare students for the future. The rate of dropout increases because academic failure rises every year (Sanders, 2008).

Sanders (2008) attributed despondency associated with failure to (a) inadequate academic preparation for high school and (b) inadequate support from adults.

According to Christodoulou (2014), educational research has found that long-term memory is capable of storing thousands of facts. Christodoulou believed the true aim of education should be to teach students facts and subject content. Bennett (2015) expressed that groups help minority students to achieve in many learning environments. Christodoulou pointed out that educators in both the United States and the United Kingdom utilize Bloom's taxonomy, which teaches students to incorporate high-order thinking skills. Bennett stated students are able to perform at higher levels of learning if they work in collaborative situations. In today's society, educational practices have limited student learning and conceptual understanding. Christodoulou maintained that educational research supports the fact that, if a student's knowledge base is not in place, the student struggles with learning new material. Learning can improve if problem-solving strategies are presented and students are confronted with various interpretations of academic materials (Bennett, 2015).

NCLB was a choice-and-accountability movement introduced in 2001. Ravitch (2010) stated the choice-and-accountability movement has not created a solution for the country's educational dilemmas. Students can become academically disengaged from school for a variety of reasons, including dissatisfaction with school due to curricular and ethnic biases (Ravitch, 2010; Sanders, 2008). Therefore, NCLB and other choice programs continue to affect a variety of equity and inclusion practices in public schools.

Thompson (2008) suggested the use of various strategies to equalize performance of minority students in urban school districts. The strategies included mentoring,

leadership, and academic programs. Both Major (2008) and Thompson (2008) posited

that self-esteem and confidence are built on some combination of reassurance and

success, and both viewed the pathway to achievement as being paved with effort, ability,

success, confidence, self-reliance, and happiness. They maintain educators should believe

in students and that this belief would create a climate for high expectations in schools.

According to Wilson (2009), "The disproportionate number of African American

children failing in schools has been an issue of concern for several decades in this

country" (p. 2). Chenoweth (2010) found that high-poverty and high-minority schools are

low-achieving schools. Wilson (2009) and Nisbett (2010) suggested the existence of

many educational disparities among African Americans and Latin Americans in the

United States. In 2009, African American and Latin American students in middle schools

scored at least 4 years behind European American students in the areas of reading and

mathematics (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Sparks (2013) found, as had Nisbett

(2010), that youths leave school and may face narrowed options for pursuit of a high

school diploma. At the time of this writing, policymakers were seeking to reexamine

current laws for the sake of increasing minority students' high school completion and

boosting the education and economic stability of all students (Sparks, 2013). At the local,

state, and national levels, laws that address the over testing of students, especially

minorities, are being reviewed, and this has negative implications on graduation rates

throughout the United States (Nisbett, 2010). Graduation rates have dropped in some

states due to testing issues that impact minority students.

Frank (2011) found that due to the transition that must be made when entering

high school, peer mentors are needed more for ninth-grade students than for students at

other grade levels in the public school environment. At this stage in school, these students

need support in the areas of behavior and academics (Frank, 2011). Both Wilson (2009)

and Frank (2011) found that they receive 43% of discipline referrals in schools.

Transition problems have caused a disparity between the performance of female minority

students and that of male minority students who are later at risk of not graduating from

high schools throughout the United States (Wilson, 2009).

A study was conducted in Texas with minority students who entered middle

school. A short and simple intervention was used with these students. Each student was

assigned a college-student mentor who helped him or her explore a variety of issues

related to school adjustment (Nisbett, 2010). Both male students and female students who

participated in the program made improvements on the Texas Assessment of Academic

Skills in the areas of reading and math (Nisbett, 2010). Several students who were

exposed to interventions were found to work harder to increase achievement in school.

Inequities exist in attitudes that affect and influence access, testing, and

curriculum in schools, and there is disparity between the performance of minority

students and the performance of majority students in schools (Ford, 2011). Blaming and

finger pointing have yet to equalize student performance. Wilson (2009) also found that

more resources are needed to close the disparities among majority and minority students

in education. Ford (2011) argued that educators must take responsibility and

accountability for sharing the blame and taking action to make positive changes; parity

will require concern, compassion, courage, commitment, and collaboration. He held that

equalizing student performance must be a top priority for both the national and the

professional community.

African American male students experience less high school and postsecondary success than their African American female peers. African American male students are also overrepresented in special education and alternative programs in high school (McNeil, 2014). Local outcomes for African American students vary widely across the United States. For example, McNeil (2014) found African American students seemed to do better than other minority groups in magnet and charter schools. Many state congressional representatives envision a common future that benefits all students and the ways in which they can help students succeed academically (McNeil, 2014).

Many U.S. citizens who are alive today lived through the federal government's effort to implement desegregation in public schools. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 required significant compliance with the court's *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) mandate to desegregate schools (Smith-Evans, 2014). *The Brown v. Board of Education* decision helped to eliminate disparities in Black and White schools to create an equal environment for all students. Because of this legislation, new schools were built and facilities were upgraded all across the United States (Bireda, 2011). Bireda (2011) found that political resistance was expressed at state levels by many people who did not agree with the new legislation. However, 60 years after the Supreme Court's order, as educators examine schools in the United States, inequities in public education still exist. Students of color still have fewer resources, evidenced by poor school facilities, large classroom sizes, and relatively fewer textbooks (Smith-Evans, 2014).

School Quality

Each year, Quality Counts conducts a survey that gleans educators' perceptions of the quality and performance of public schools (Hightower, 2011). According to

Hightower's discussion, in 2011, the United States earned an average grade of "C" (p. 42) for the performance of public schools—the same grade as the previous year. Letter grades are based on (a) the teaching profession, (b) standards, (c) assessments, and (d) accountability measures. The survey takes into account current state performance, improvements, and equity as measured in terms of both current performance levels and changes. In 2011, the top-achieving states included Massachusetts, Maryland, and New Jersey. No state consistently demonstrated excellence in all elements each year. Current state performance levels were measured by the new CCSS and national norm reference tests (Goldstein, 2015). Florida, which finished sixth in the nation, ranked Number 24 for academic achievement but emerged as a top state in the areas of improvement and equity (Hightower, 2011).

States continue to make efforts to connect education and workforce preparation for public school students. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation assist low-income and first-generation students to prepare for college (Fleming, 2011). This foundation also helps students earn an associate degree for no out-of-pocket cost. Despite significant disparities, states tend to fare better when education is improved for all students, and this has a positive impact on the equity in schools (Hightower, 2011). Educators encounter politicians, philanthropists, intellectuals, parents, and business leaders who continue to impact reform on education and implement failed ideas in schools (Goldstein, 2015).

Two influential measures emerged from the survey: CCSS and the Race to the Top federal grant program (Hightower, 2011). These two measures will have an effect on students of color in public education. CCSS and the Race to the Top program are now requiring students to be assessed in different ways, which will significantly impact

students when they take the newly developed standardized test that will be created by states to address these two measures. Stimulus-related funds have been used to implement the Race to the Top program. Under this new program, 11 states have split $4 billion in competitive grants to develop a comprehensive educational plan nationally (Klein, 2011). Hightower (2011) and Klein (2011) found that many educators believed these new initiatives are difficult to implement in this financial climate, and educators are trying to retain programs that are valid and reliable.

Over the years, there has been significant movement in public education related to establishing college-readiness policies to help educators assist high school students in improving their educational opportunities (Klein, 2011). According to Klein (2011), Florida and several other states fund college-readiness programs using property tax revenues and school funding, and several states assist students in furthering their education, finding employment opportunities, and leading a civic life after high school. States such as Illinois create programs that support students in middle and high school so they can achieve success after they graduate. The University of Chicago implements the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, which helps to grow college and career readiness programs in public schools (Fleming, 2011).

In the wake of NCLB, many educators focus on building partnerships between school districts and colleges of education to support student development and academic learning (Dubin, 2013). For the last 200 years, the American public school system has continued to close the academic and social gaps among students in public schools (Goldstein, 2015). NCLB often focused on test scores, and it did not include a development perspective to assist students (Izlar, 2010). This hindered the progress

schools and districts were making in education. Some schools receive Title I funding from this legislation, and if schools fail to meet the NCLB requirement target 2 years in a row, students could receive extra tutoring and supplemental educational services for extra assistance (Izlar, 2010). Therefore, if schools continue to fail, they will be subjected to outside corrective measures and possible educational changes.

The Race to the Top program is at the midway point and many school districts continue to face many challenges with implementation of this new education initiative (Hightower, 2011). The ESEA received a bipartisan vote for a rewrite that will focus on the issue of how funds will be distributed to states and school districts (Samuels, 2015). When the current bill passes, states will have to use money in other areas that was not previously required with the Race to the Top program. Many of the winners of competitive grants under the Obama Administration's education redesign are struggling to discern how to use the money to help struggling students achieve academically (McNeil, 2011). The two main areas of concern are implementing teacher evaluation systems and upgrading data systems. The District of Columbia, Georgia, and Maryland received funds from the federal government but have not complied with educational requirements (McNeil, 2011).

From autumn of 2011 through 2012, the U.S. Department of Education conducted a study to see how the Race to the Top program, funded by the 2009 economic stimulus package to help school districts around the country, was being implemented in school districts around the nation (McNeil, 2011). The Race to the Top program continues to measure student achievement, test scores, school climate, and teacher and principal evaluation systems. Most states are using CCSS to implement the Race to the Top

program (Hightower, 2011). This program is a federally funded mandated legislation that requires states to improve CCSS in the academic curriculum in schools.

The Obama Administration recognized four states–Delaware, Hawaii, North Carolina, and Tennessee–for leading the way in the Race to the Top (McNeil, 2014). McNeil (2014) noted many educators believe Race to the Top legislation still to be struggling with the issues of teacher evaluation systems and low-performing schools, and, now in the final year of implementation, the Race to the Top program has become one of the most important of the Obama Administration's implemented domestic policy initiatives. This legislation is a key component of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's legacy. According to McNeil, states are still struggling with keeping promises regarding the implementation of Race to the Top legislation, the goal of which is to help students be successful in college, the community, and careers.

The ESEA rewrite cleared the Senate committee and includes elements for gifted students and students with disabilities (Samuels, 2015). The reauthorization of ESEA exists to close the achievement gap for all students in schools. Samuels (2015) noted this legislation will also address Title I programs that assist minority students in low-poverty areas. The passing of the ESSA legislation will impact states and how they implement the CCSS. The new ESSA law now requires that states hold all students to high academic standards and prepare them for college and careers (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

CCSS compose part of the Race to the Top program (Hightower, 2011). The content of common core integrates and evaluates standards in diverse formats, including visual, quantitative, and word formats. Informational text is important because it includes

visual representation of data to help readers understand the text. The CCSS require evidence to support student knowledge (McNeil, 2011). McNeil (2011) and Dubin (2013) suggested that CCSS would move the United States closer to what exists in other countries. CCSS would ensure all states possess high-quality standards and establish criteria for what students should be expected to learn (Hightower, 2011). Fink (2012) suggested that CCSS allow educators to use developmentally appropriate cross-curricular instruction to teach complex concepts. McNeil (2011) and Fink agreed that CCSS pull essential components out of the curriculum so educators have fewer things to teach.

Republicans in the U.S. Congress sponsored legislation that will restrict CCSS in many state legislatures (Klein, 2014). The Obama Administration gave $360 million in federal stimulus funds to assist states in developing tests that align with the CCSS in academic curriculums (Klein, 2014). Many educators believe the issue of CCSS will only widen the partisan divide in the U.S. Congress (Klein, 2014). Debates over CCSS and the impact it will have on education in the future continue in state legislatures.

Educators around the country believe policymakers are reducing the CCSS to high-stakes test scores (Weingarten, 2014). According to Weingarten (2014), in order to reclaim the promise in public education, several things should happen, including helping students build trusting relationships, equipping students with essential knowledge and the ability to think critically, and assisting students in developing persistence and grit to deal with struggles and setbacks in public education. Weingarten noted that reclaiming the promise in public education should include supporting communities, making schools safer, and having collaborative and welcoming environments. Some educators have expressed concern about the CCSS and the affect they will have on student achievement

(Klein, 2014). Schools should have rigorous standards but also have an engaging curriculum that focuses on teaching and learning (Weingarten, 2014). American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, who supports the CCSS, has also presented several critiques of the legislation.

CCSS require teachers to do the hard work of assessing the real work of students (Ruenzel, 2014). Many advocates of CCSS believe these standards set a new vision of learning for students. CCSS allow for real improvements in teaching and learning. Teacher evaluation systems will also be affected by CCSS, which call for principals and teachers to receive the right support to deepen their knowledge of effective educational practices (Ruenzel, 2014).

McNeil (2011) characterized U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan as concerned about the negative label attached to failing schools by NCLB. High schools serving low-income students lack funding and have less access to quality educators. NCLB has reestablished a workable array of requirements. According to McNeil (2011), 82% of American schools could be labeled "failing" (p. 3), which means educators have failed to serve the students with the greatest needs. McNeil (2011) also noted that the U.S. Congress continues to work to reauthorize NCLB; this should be a warning for states to create changes in the public educational system on the state level. The updated version of the ESEA will require states to establish a single statewide accountability system to address student achievement and educational standards (Samuels, 2015).

In 2009, the U.S. Congress, at the request of President Obama, spent nearly $100 billion in economic stimulus money to hand out NCLB Act waivers to almost every state, and Secretary Duncan informed all states they must test all students in math and reading

(McNeil, 2014). The federal government will continue to monitor states and districts and hold them accountable for promises that were made to get competitive grants and waivers. Both Samuels (2015) and McNeil (2014) found that NCLB waivers were given out to help states comply with the federal educational policies and regulations. According to McNeil (2014), the U.S. Department of Education will continue to work with states to raise standards and expand early learning opportunities for all students. Meanwhile, Secretary Duncan continues to spend much of his media capital, time, and lobbying effort to expand President Obama's plan for educational reform.

Pressure from local school districts to meet accountability measures makes keeping at-risk children in class challenging for educators (Elias, 2013). Today, schools that have majority Black and brown students are both stigmatized and undereducated (Bireda, 2011). According to the U.S. Department of Justice (as cited in Elias, 2013), the number of school resource officers rose 38% between 1997 and 2007. Also according to the U.S. Department of Justice, more than 70% of students arrested in school-related incidents were Latin American or African American. Zero-tolerance disciplinary policies tend to be the first step in minority students' journey through the pipeline. The National Association of Colored People, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Southern Poverty Law Center have asked for zero-tolerance-related disciplinary actions to be reformed in schools (Elias, 2013). More educators and administrators are needed to foster a more inclusive school community for minority students (Tomlinson, 2015). Tomlinson (2015) suggested that students of color need to see professionals in their environment who share their cultural background and this will help minority students to have better behavior in school.

Zero tolerance has become a one-size-fits-all solution to all the problems that happen at school. Many of these policies have defined students as criminals; consequences have been unfortunate. According to a U.S. Department of Justice (as cited in Elias, 2013) complaint, many school officials have given armed police officers authority to stop, frisk, detain, question, search, and arrest students on and off school grounds. Schools, districts, and states have defined *drug*, *threat*, *violence*, and *weapon* in their own terms while setting rules for the punishment of youths. Students need to see educators of color, which will narrow the vision gap for minority students in public schools (Vilson, 2015). Bireda (2011) asserted that behavior, culture, climate, good policies, and community support are important factors that enable minority children to learn in school.

Elias pointed out that in 2013, Senator Richard Durbin held the first federal hearing on the issue of the school-to-prison pipeline and the important steps toward ending policies that favor incarceration over education. Senator Durbin, a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, addressed how schools are becoming a gateway to the criminal justice system. The school-to-prison pipeline (Elias, 2013) starts in the classroom. Automatic punishments of students of color that result in suspensions and outside-class time are huge contributions to the pipeline system. These policies are combined with zero tolerance and a teacher's decision to refer students for punishment outside the classroom; this often leads to students' becoming involved in the criminal justice system (Elias, 2013).

Across the United States, a number of disproportionately African American and Latin American youth live in poverty (Elias, 2013). Many are pushed out of school and

eventually enter the juvenile justice system. States around the country have passed legislation barring the placement of youths in adult jails. The phrase *school-to-prison pipeline* (Elias, 2013) has been widely used to describe what happens when misconduct is answered with suspension, expulsion, and police intervention of students who misbehave in school. African Americans represent only 17% of public school enrollment nationwide but account for 34% of school suspensions (Elias, 2013). Nearly 52% of public school students are White and 48% are people of color; therefore, more educators of color are needed in schools (Tomlinson, 2015). Elias (2013) and Tomlinson (2015) both agreed that school-to-prison pipeline is an important issue that should be reviewed in regards to children of color and how they are educated in school.

The purpose of the NCLB Act was to ensure every child in every school performed at grade level in reading and math by the 2013-2014 school year (Izlar, 2010). NCLB legislation did not give enough assistance to disadvantaged and minority students in public schools (McNeil, 2014). Schools are on the front lines for integrating minority families into the fabric of the larger society (Izlar, 2010). NCLB was formerly used as a catalyst for implementing social integration programs to assist students in public schools. Social integration programs were essential for both NCLB and the success of a diverse student population (Izlar, 2010).

In 2010, only 11% of Latin American and 4% of African American students met the benchmarks for college readiness (Gewertz, 2010). According to ACT (2015), 25% of Latin American and 12% of African American students met three benchmarks for college readiness. College readiness, a component of the CCSS, mandates what states must address in their educational policies. The United States is subject to a shift in thinking as

educators continue to measure and address the issues of public education (Gewertz, 2010). The reauthorization of the ESEA legislation is an example of how states would be required to adopt challenging academic content and standards in education in most states (Samuels, 2015).

School Connection

Improving the educational and employment opportunities of minority male students is vital to this country (Somers et al., 2008). Many minority students abandon the educational process altogether because they feel unsupported by the school system and by their communities (Banks, 2006). School culture communicates to students how the school views them and their peers. Somers et al. (2008) also noted that when the culture promotes values, respect, and collegiality, students are often positive in their everyday lives.

Urban schools should have a healthy school climate, which, according to educators, develops a positive effect on the success of minority students. Educators have found schools' environments and mobility rates to be factors of poor graduation rates (Somers et al., 2008). Clearly, according to Somers et al. (2008), school climate and culture are essential to minority male students' achievement. In addition to teacher support and parental involvement, these components are needed for students to make school connections (Kozol, 2010).

Schools must support at-risk students on academic, social, and emotional levels (Balfanz, 2011). Public schools should create a personalized learning environment for students (Kozol, 2010). Balfanz (2011) and Kozol (2010) found that relationships among teachers, students, and families can improve student efforts and teacher effectiveness in

at-risk school environments. According to Balfanz (2011), programs like Talent Development have assisted schools in creating small learning communities, interdisciplinary teams, and looping strategies, and the programs are used to raise student achievement, promotion, and graduation rates in many of the nation's most challenged high-poverty secondary schools. Diverse programs are needed to develop whole-school reform, an early warning system, and a second shift of educators to keep students on the path toward graduation. The federal government continues to create incentives to encourage and provide additional funding to assist minority students in low-poverty areas (Kozol, 2010).

In a learning community, parents and teachers work together to maximize the learning of students (Banks, 2006). Therefore, to create a healthy environment for students of all cultures, the school must be seriously committed to ensuring the success of all children (Kozol, 2010). The three main classroom orientations that are used to increase learning are collaboration, cooperation, and encouragement of critical-thinking skills (Banks, 2006). In-school learning environments should be open and should encourage collaboration and critical thinking (Kozol, 2010). Educators should not hold preconceived expectations about their students, educators' minds should be open, and students should be encouraged to keep open minds (Banks, 2006).

Historically, minority male students have been victims of ethnic discrimination in schools (Bell, 2010). Schools should teach minority males social developmental resources which, according to Banks (2006), are built on the modeling of the attitudes, dispositions, and reflections of others. Minority males should be taught the components of effective communication where they can use these skills inside and outside the

classroom (Bell, 2010). As noted by Bell (2010), minority males must be taught how to survive in today's classrooms.

Many have argued that minority students' experiences do not relate to the cultural norms reinforced in most American classrooms and that this disparity creates an academic disadvantage for these students (Garth-McCullough, 2008). Educators can incorporate prior-knowledge strategies to support minority students and to promote high academic achievement in schools (Garth-McCullough, 2008). Educators in schools must be able to understand the ethnic backgrounds of all students. In addition, the school connection should offer all students important skills—listening, understanding, monitoring, connecting, and communicating effectively—so all students can be productive in school (Kozol, 2010).

School climate involves norms, values, and expectations that support people's feeling socially safe in an environment. Emphasis should be placed on the collective sense of safety and care for the physical and social environments of a school (Samuels, 2008). The National School Climate Center identified several elements of school climate: safety, interpersonal relationships, teaching, and learning (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). Affordable school climate benefits educators, parents, and students. According to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (as cited in Samuels, 2008), minority students' sense of belonging is very important in the school community. Many educators in middle school use proactive strategies to create a school culture of connectivity, thereby reducing the likelihood of violence. According to the U.S. Office of Civil Rights, African American students are three times more likely than their European American counterparts to be suspended (Samuels, 2008).

President Obama introduced an initiative called My Brother's Keeper in which he vowed to give more young Americans the support they need to make good choices, to be resilient and overcome obstacles, and to achieve their dreams. He acknowledged the groups facing some of the most severe challenges in the 21st century in the United States are boys and young men of color. This program, launched by President Obama in 2014, will focus on White House partnerships with businesses, nonprofits, and foundations to address disparities in education, criminal justice, and employment (Rich, 2014) and will serve as a task force to determine best practices to address the challenges faced by young minority men. These partnerships will work with the White House to establish the My Brother's Keeper initiative. The president discussed those 50 years after Dr. King's dream for U.S. children; still, life advantages for the average U.S. child of color continue to lag behind in almost every measure (Rich, 2014). This is just one of the latest initiatives by the Obama administration to combat disparities between ethnic groups in public policy and education.

Cultural Connection

Cultural experiences play a role in hindering minority students in public schools. Many minority students are negatively affected by cultural experiences within the public school system. Kozol (2010) and Morgan (2010) found that minority students are more likely than majority students to encounter problems in school, and they are less likely than majority students to be identified as gifted or talented. Many educators do not understand the cultural needs of these groups (Morgan, 2010). Banks (2006) and Thompson (2008) emphasized that minority students' methods of learning and communicating differ from majority students. Cultures' varying communication and

learning styles can lead to conflicts in schools and low academic achievement. Thus, minority students are likely to perform poorly academically and regard school negatively if teaching styles do not match the ways in which they communicate when they receive knowledge (Banks, 2006). Banks and Morgan agreed that culture and academics affect minority students in the classroom.

Cultural diversity influences how minority students view school and the relationships they have with educators. Teachers who are unfamiliar with students' cultural upbringings may perceive minority students as unwilling to learn or receive a quality education (Morgan, 2010). Many African American and Latin American students relate differently than European American students to a teacher's speaking style. Teachers who speak in a preaching style to direct students create a positive school environment for most minority students (Morgan, 2010). Banks (2006) agreed that students of color respond differently to a teacher's speaking style as compared to European American students in the classroom setting.

Some educators ignore, minimize, and misrepresent the history and culture of African Americans and Latin Americans. Most African American and Latin American students believe their classes are boring, and they want to learn more about their cultural heritage in school (Thompson, 2008). Hence, cultural changes need to take place in schools so that academic progress can be made among African American and Latin American students (Thompson, 2008). Educators have an obligation not to generalize, which can weaken culturally responsive teaching. Teachers in a culturally diverse society have a duty to reach students who learn and communicate in various ways (Morgan, 2010).

School leaders must be guardians of their students' future, not of their staff members' happiness (Chenoweth, 2010). Consequently, all stakeholders are responsible for creating and nurturing a welcoming environment for all students of various cultures. According to Banks (2006) and Thompson (2008), practitioners of education in public schools need to be culturally and ethnically diverse in 21st-century classrooms. Cultural education brings freedom that is essential in an ethnically polarized society (Banks, 2006). Educators need to be able to implement equitable pedagogy and related teaching strategies competently because all students benefit from cultural awareness (Banks, 2006). Therefore, diversity in schools can be properly managed and all students should feel empowered in the classroom.

Students' perceptions of unfair discipline practices can cause apathy and frustration with the school environment (Thompson, 2008). Thompson (2008) and Willoughby (2013) agreed that educators should adjust disciplinary choices to encourage learning rather than push students out of the classroom. Racism in schools can exist on internal, interpersonal, instructional, and cultural levels (Willoughby, 2013). Therefore, discipline changes must take place in schools with minority students.

Banks (2006) identified several differences among students, including ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, geographic region, abilities, and disabilities. Many educators have a hard time finding the appropriate way to connect with and educate students of various ethnic backgrounds. Before an educator enters the classroom, he or she needs an understanding of diversity (Banks, 2006). Past discrimination in school systems and different learning styles can be discussed with educators in a professional setting (Banks, 2006). Educational programs should teach educators the

importance of understanding the diverse backgrounds of all students (Banks, 2006).

According to Banks (2006), academic content must be presented to students in such a way that they can connect with it. Changes in how the teacher addresses the classroom must be made. Many educators agree to teach students about culture. Educators who do not feel comfortable with available curricula can use a traditional approach to provide instruction regarding multicultural issues and awareness. The learning experiences of a child can reflect the rich cultural diversity that characterizes the Western Hemisphere in the 21st century (Banks, 2006).

Banks' (2006) research indicated that multiple factors of education directly or indirectly affect achievement among minority male students. Over several decades, research found that minority male students perform more poorly in school than do European American male students (Morgan, 2010). The educational process can be improved for minority males if they are given extra support through schools, special programs, and parents. Additional research is needed to determine the influence of mentoring programs on minority male students in public schools.

Many educators spend time trying to develop learning environments that can be transformed to improve the academic performance of all children (Ash, 2013). Cultural innovation in schools involves strong administrators, the infusion of technology, and empowered teachers and students. Educators can encourage informed risk taking and experimentation in the classroom (Ash, 2013). Educators need to understand and address the ways in which the world may treat their students as members of an ethnic group (Willoughby, 2013).

Academic success is often associated with ethnicity and class. Ash (2013) and

Willoughby (2013) agreed that innovation is the balance needed to address institutional

ethnic bias in the classroom. School leaders must develop an everyday consciousness

about ethnic matters in schools (Ash, 2013). Pollock (as cited in Willoughby, 2013)

suggested that a question be asked when assessing and addressing institutional ethnic bias

in schools, such as am I seeing and understanding ethnic groups, addressing community

issues, understanding minority students' opportunities to learn or thrive, and offering

necessary opportunities to address these issues for students in American societies.

Willoughby maintained there is no one-size-fits-all response to ethnic bias in schools.

The terms that should be used to refer to ethnic bias are *structural ethnic bias* and

systemic ethnic bias, which reflect layers of historical oppression (Willoughby, 2013).

Ash suggested school leaders should address these issues of bias as much as possible in

order to have a fair and equal learning environment for all students.

Culture continues to play an important role in the lives of minority males in public

schools. A study was conducted with a number of Black males between the ages of 13

and 22 in Washington, D. C. and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The study found that culture

and the community environment were the biggest factors in determining what will make

Black males successful in school (Sparrow & Sparrow, 2012). Many of the minority

males in the study felt that who they hung out with in and out of school determined their

overall success. All of the young men understood the importance of a good and quality

education (Sparrow & Sparrow, 2012). Minority males in the study contributed culture,

family, and community as factors that helped them to achieve success in life. The

students in the study also discussed the importance of cohesive families, attentive parents,

and positive role models in their lives (Sparrow & Sparrow, 2012). Many of these young

men were convinced that if they were not educated they would turn to the streets to sell drugs. They believed they needed parental and teacher support to be successful in school. The young men also recounted that some teachers went above and beyond to assist them in school and keep young men of color from a life of crime (Sparrow & Sparrow, 2012).

Several instances in the past several years have occurred involving the deaths of African American youths. Many community leaders are dismayed because they see no justice for African American males in today's society. Events that have taken place around the United States include the killings of M. Brown, T. Martin, E. Gardner, and J. Davis (all African American males) and have resulted in many protests and panel discussions nationwide about how the United States is dealing with gun violence. These often unspoken beliefs include fear, cultural bias, ambivalence, and discrimination against Black boys and men. Just a few incidents indicated gun violence poses a serious threat to African American males and other men of color. In the United States, in 2010, across all age groups, 31,672 individuals were killed by firearms; 35% of these killings were homicides, and 65% were suicides (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that urban youth are influenced by popular culture, which reflects minorities in a negative light, and these representations give youth attitudes, perspectives, world views, and ideologies in matters of race, politics, education, gun violence, and the criminal justice system (Prier (2015).

Initiatives are needed to address the culture and community of gun violence among African American and Latin American males in secondary schools. Victimization is especially high among male youths of African American and Latin American descent. Educational leadership is needed in schools, to integrate minority students' voices and

culture in educational settings to create a more positive environment (Prier, 2015). Many programs such as the 5000 Roles of Excellence Project promote positive interaction between youth and law enforcement personal. Due to gun violence in schools and in the communities, many mentoring groups were prompted to provide information to students of color on how to address law enforcement issues (Sparrow & Sparrow, 2012).

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

Research Question 1. What is the difference between the graduation rates in one middle school of eighth-grade minority male students who have been involved in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project during the 2014-2015 school year, and eighth-grade minority male students who have not been involved in the program?

Research Question 2. How satisfied are mentors and parents of eighth-grade minority male students with the mentoring program of the urban middle school under study?

Research Question 3. What are students' perceptions of their involvement in the program and its impact?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Participants

The target populations were composed of eighth-grade students, parents, and mentors at one middle school. Two hundred and fifty eighth-grade students attended this middle school, of which one hundred were male minority students. Of these, 20 male minority students met the criteria and participated in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, while 80 minority male students did not participate in the project. The study focused only on the 20 student participants in the program, who were then compared with those 80 minority male students who did not participate.

Three sampling groups for the purpose of this study were (a) 20 adult mentors, (b) 20 parents of eighth-grade minority students enrolled in the program, and (c) 20 students enrolled in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project. All participants were recruited from the middle school site of this study. The mentors in the program were engaged by the director of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project through recommendations from educators who worked in the local school district. All of the mentors were minorities, either African American or Latin American, and 15 were male and five were female. Parents were recruited by educators in the school, and all had children who were involved in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project at the time of this study. Of the 20 parents, 10 parents volunteered to participate in focus groups and interviews.

The student participants were recruited through teacher recommendations and in order to participate in the study, they had to be (a) African-American or Hispanic-American eighth-grade males, (b) be participants in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, and (c) have earned low FCAT scores and teacher created end-of-year exam

scores. Twenty eighth-grade male minority students met the criteria and were enrolled in the program. The test scores were also used to assess school and district-level achievement among African American and Latin American students. Test scores were reviewed over the school year to evaluate the achievement levels of these students. The student participants in the study included 11 African Americans (55%) and nine Hispanic Americans (45%). Participants were informed that the study was completely voluntary and any participant would be free to discontinue participation at any time. Participation was encouraged by a drawing to win a Burger King gift card worth $5 or $10. Parental consent was also required for students to participate in this study (see Appendix B).

Instruments

The researcher used surveys, focus group meetings, and records obtained from the school computer system as principal methods of data collection. The researcher developed a survey for each group of students, parents, and mentors. Each survey consisted of 11 questions that concerned participant level of knowledge, involvement, and satisfaction with the program. Each survey was specific to the needs of the targeted population (see Appendices A, C, and D).

Reliability and validity were addressed in this study. The validity helps to check the quality of the research and the results of the study (Creswell & Clark, 2011). For reliability, a researcher should administer the same instrument to all participants the same number of times (Creswell & Clark, 2011). A survey was administered to each group once at the beginning of the program (see Appendices A, C, and D). The questions in the survey addressed feelings and perceptions about the mentoring program. The surveys were administered to the target population, as follows:

1. Mentors who assisted eighth-grade male students at the research site who were enrolled in the school system's 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project.

2. Parents of children who attended the school in the study and who took part in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project.

3. Eighth-grade minority male students enrolled in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project

A set of criteria was established for developing surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project during the early months of 2014. The established criteria were predetermined and presented to the committee of experts for review purposes. The committee of experts included U.S. Congresswomen Frederica S. Wilson, the founder of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, as well as mentors, educators, and parents from the community, all of whom were involved in the project. These committee members all had prior experience with the program and had made valuable contributions to the current success of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project. The members of the committee were recruited on a volunteer basis through recommendations of local educators who worked in the public school district. The criteria for the program included academic support, field trips, mentoring, and other resources as outlined by the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, and these criteria were explained to parents and students upon enrollment in the program. In addition, the committee of experts gave feedback on the survey to give parents, mentors, and students a better understanding of mentoring and how this program could assist minority male students in middle schools.

The purpose of the surveys was to determine participants' perceptions of the 5000

Role Models of Excellence Project. Security procedures for implementation and for storage of completed surveys and data analyses were conducted by the researcher, who will keep the information secured for a period of 2 years after study completion. The information collected by the researcher will be destroyed after the secure storage period. Participants were provided survey results at the conclusion of the evaluation process. The student survey (Appendix A), the parent survey (Appendix C) and the mentor survey (Appendix D) each had 11 questions. Most of the questions asked participants to respond with one of three answer choices for each question: "Yes," "No," and "I don't know." Participants were also invited to receive further information on any questions by leaving as comment.

Validity was maintained by having experts review the instrument (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The content of the surveys was validated by two research experts, and the reliability of the instruments was checked. The experts were educators who were involved in the program at the school site. Reliability and validity were important for this study so that future research can be added to expand the project to similar middle schools (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Procedures

This study employed a quantitative approach and used an ex-post-facto research design to examine the impact of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, which was implemented without manipulation (e.g. random assignment to groups or conditions). Examining the impact ex-post facto allowed the researcher to gather relevant data to determine the overall effectiveness of the program. To address the research questions, the researcher gathered information from several sources, including quantitative data from

the local school district's database regarding graduation rates of eighth-grade minority

male students. The students in the program had meetings with the mentors every Monday

and Wednesday between 4:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. The meetings took place at the school

site for a period of 16 weeks and included the school site director.

Participants completed surveys and participated in focus groups, which consisted

of 10 parents, 20 students, and 20 mentors. The student survey (see Appendix A)

gathered information from 20 minority male students who participated in the program.

The student survey, which took about 30 minutes to complete, was administered to the

students for the purpose of gathering their perceptions about the program. The survey

addressed various questions that related to the mentoring program. The three surveys also

invited additional comments in regards to the program. The variables that were measured

consisted of (a) the middle school graduation rate of 20 minority students enrolled in the

project, (b) parents' perceptions of student involvement in the community, and (c)

mentors' satisfaction with the program. The middle school graduation rate of all minority

students was measured based on promotion to the ninth grade.

The researcher used a quantitative design to determine the impact of the 5000

Role Models of Excellence Project and to ascertain the success of a mentoring program in

one middle school. This included data from survey results, focus groups, and academic

data obtained from the school site. All data were collected during the spring of 2015.

Initially, the researcher conducted a literature review of relevant information, centering

on mentoring programs at the middle school level and programs in place at the time of

this study, to address minority male students in public schools. The review related to

focus groups and the main components of a successful mentoring program that addressed

the needs of minority male students.

Quantitative data. Sampling procedures involved analysis of survey questions and responses by the participants through focus groups, interviews, and meetings. Three sampling groups were used: mentors, parents of eighth-grade students in the program, and students in the program. The population consisted of eighth-grade students at the urban middle school under study. Quantitative data concentrated on information collected from school records of 80 minority students who were not involved with the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project, 20 minority students who were involved with the project, and the impact on academic achievement.

Data collection. After permission was granted by parents and mentors, the researcher-developed surveys (see Appendices C and D) were administered**.** The research addressed the percentage of parents, students, and mentors who felt the mentoring program benefitted minority male students**.** Surveys were created to determine how participants felt about their involvement with the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project and whether they perceived they benefited from the program. Data from the surveys were collected during the 2014-2015 school year. When surveys were completed, all participants were asked to clarify concerns in focus groups discussions with the program director. The concerns were addressed using the using the yes/no focus group questions. School records and student data were compared based on the participants' involvement in the project. The focus group information was gathered from 10 parents, 20 students, and 20 mentors (see Appendices E & F).

Data Analysis

Graduation rate. The graduation rates of eighth-grade minority male students

who were involved in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project were analyzed in the study to determine the impact of the project on graduation rates of these minority male students. Because of increasing suspensions and expulsions of African American and Latin American males in this public school district, graduation rates are important. Thus, the researcher collected the graduation rates at the end of the school year to compare rates of students who were involved in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project with those who were not involved. The comparison of eighth-grade graduation rates considered in the study was determined by the school records and student transcript information obtained by school counselors at this middle school.

Satisfaction. Surveys assessed satisfaction with the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project (see Appendices A, C and D). Knowledge of perceptions and satisfaction with the program was important to the researcher's making recommendations at the conclusion of the study. Opinions were also important to drive recommendations for the program. The format of the questions presented limitations to the researcher in that it was difficult to garner opinions from the closed-question format.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Parents were invited to participate by letter during the fall of 2014 and asked to sign a form if they wished to participate (see Appendix B). Parents were also advised that all information would be anonymous, discrete, and time sensitive. Approval for the use of human subjects was secured through Nova Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board and the local school board during the fall of 2014. Prior parental consent was required for students to be involved in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project and consent documents were kept on file by the local school. Information on students who participated in the 5000 Role Models of

Excellence Project within the school system at the time of this applied dissertation study was gathered. The researcher collected survey data using appropriate measures to the limited nature of the survey, which included demographic data such as racial background, gender, age, years in the program, and academic skills of the student. Survey responses were analyzed to determine any correlation between participants' expectations and their final appraisal of the program.

The final step was a presentation of results to the director of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project during the spring of 2014. The presentation included a summative assessment and recommendations for making the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project effective with the assistance of ongoing evaluation. The research process ensured the program would continue to meet the needs of minority male students. Quantitative research allowed the study to focus on numeric analysis and statistics (Gall et al., 2010).

Chapter 4: Results

Overview

To assess whether the goals of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project could be achieved, surveys were administered, and students' graduation rates were reviewed, with the intent of answering three research questions:

Research Question 1. What is the difference between the graduation rates in one middle school of eighth-grade minority male students who have been involved in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project during the 2014-2015 school year, and eighth-grade minority male students who have not been involved in the program?

Research Question 2. How satisfied are mentors and parents of eighth-grade minority male students with the mentoring program of the urban middle school under study?

Research Question 3. What are students' perceptions of their involvement in the program and its impact?

Research Question 1

The comparison data from school records show that the 20 students who participated in the project graduated from eighth grade at a higher rate compared to the minority students who were not involved. Fifteen students (75%) in the program passed all six classes and graduated from eighth grade in June 2015. Only five students (25%) in the program were not passing for the 2014-2015 school year and were required to attend summer school in order to move to the ninth-grade level. In contrast, all 80 minority eighth-grade males (100%) not enrolled in the program were required to attend summer school in order to graduate from eighth grade or be retained in the eighth grade. Students

were required to pass all six courses in order to be promoted to the ninth grade. All 20

students (100%) who were involved in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project were

promoted to high school. Only 80% of the students who were not involved in the program

were promoted to high school. Sixteen students who were not in the mentoring program

were retained in the eighth grade.

Research Question 2

Several survey items addressed the satisfaction of mentors and parents regarding

expectations in the study, and these are summarized below (See Tables 1 and 2).

Research Question 2 was addressed in part by both the Parent Survey and Mentor Survey

(see Appendices C and D). All 20 parents responded to the Parent Survey and 100%

agreed the program was vital in helping their children achieve academic success in school

(see Table 1). All 20 parents also agreed that the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project

provided good role models and there was a need for this project at the middle school

level. Nine parents (45%) were Latin American and 11 parents (55%) were African

American. All of the parents responded in a positive manner and indicated that they were

pleased their children were involved and wanted them to continue to participate with the

program as they entered high school for the 2015-2016 school year.

Five focus questions were asked of parents, mentors, and students who were part

of the focus group to enable the researcher to gain more feedback and understanding

about the program. Some of the questions asked of mentors were designed to assess their

enjoyment of the program and any benefits to both the mentor and the student. The

questions presented limitations, as they were in closed-question format and allowed only

a "yes" or "no" response. However, most mentors saw themselves as parental figures, and

all mentors perceived themselves as role models for the students enrolled in the project. The mentors identified this program as a significant component in helping minority males' graduate from school. Table 2 reveals 20 mentors participated in the survey: two Latin Americans (10%) and 18 African Americans (90%).

Five focus group questions for parents and mentors included:

1. Does the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project help students to achieve success in school?

2. Do the resources of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project provide additional support for students?

3. Does the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project provide good role models for students?

4. Is there a need for this type of mentoring project in middle school?

5. Will you continue to be involved with the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project?

Five focus group questions for students included:

1. Does the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project help you to achieve success in school?

2. Do the resources of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project provide you with additional support?

3. Does the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project provide good role models for you?

4. Is there a need for this type of mentoring project in your middle school?

5. Will you continue to be involved with the 5000 Role Models of Excellence

Project?

Table 4 describes the results of the focus group questions that were asked of parent and mentor groups. Table 5 describes the results of the focus group questions that were asked of students. All responses were "yes" from all three groups. The three groups were parents, mentors, and students. Also, all three groups responded in a positive manner in general as it relates to the program.

The results of the Parent Survey are listed in Table 1. Item 1 asked about the relationship to the student involved in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project. Item 2 discussed the parent involvement with in the program, and all parents agreed that they were involved. Item 3 asked about parent awareness of the activities of the program and all the parents agreed that they were aware of the activities. Item 4 explained about the benefits of the program and the parents agreed that the program was helpful. Item 5 reported if parents were satisfied with the mentors who assisted students in the program, and all parents were satisfied. Item 6 asked parents if they had been informed of the short and long term goals; all parents agreed that they had been informed. Item 7 discussed if parents were informed of the meetings as they related to the program, and all parents reported that they had been informed. Item 8 asked parents if they had been involved in the planning and implementation of the program, and they all agreed that they had been informed. Item 9 asked parents if they were satisfied with the learning opportunities of the program, and parents agreed that learning opportunities had benefited their children. Item 10 asked about the impact of the program and parents found the program to be very positive for their children. The parents felt their child had someone to talk to when parents were working or otherwise unavailable. All parents felt their children were in a

great environment and that the mentoring program provided stability for their child. More

importantly, the parents felt a sense of security regarding the mentors and the program.

The results from the survey showed that the parents viewed the 5000 Role Models Project

in a positive manner.

Table 1

Parent Survey Results

Question Theme	Responses	Number of Parents	Percentage of Parents	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Parent Relationship	Yes	20	100.0	100.0	100.0
Program Involvement	Yes	20	100.0	100.0	100.0
Aware of activities and meetings	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100.0
Informed of benefits	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100.0
Mentor assistance	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100.0
Informed of Goals: Long/Short term	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100.0
Informed of meetings	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100.0
Included in planning and implementation	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100.0
Provides learning Opportunity	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100.0
Positive influence	Yes	20	100.0	100.0	100.0

The results of the Mentor Survey are listed in Table 2. Item 1 showed that the average

age group was 40-44. Item 2 showed that 17 of 20 mentors had volunteered for the

program. For Item 3, most of the mentors (13) had worked with other programs. Item 4

showed that most mentors (18) were involved with the planning and implementation of

the program. For Item 5, all mentors described the program as being helpful to minority males. In Item 6, all mentors agreed that students see them as role models. For Item 7, all mentors agreed that the program had a positive influence on students. For Item 8 all mentors agreed that the program had recruited good role models. Item 9 also had a positive response that students took advantage of the program. All mentors agreed with Item 10, in that they highly recommend this program to future mentors. On each survey, all 20 parents and all 20 mentors agreed with the questions that were presented in their respective survey (see Appendices C and D).

The data from the surveys showed satisfaction with the program among the three groups. Davis (2009) also found positive data from the program when an evaluation was conducted with secondary students. Feelings and perceptions are important to the participants who were involved with the study. The researcher wanted to know what were the true perceptions and feelings of participants involved with the mentoring program, which is the reason the researcher conducted the study at one middle school. The concept that mentoring is needed for minority male students in secondary schools was also discussed by Banks (2006) and Rhodes (2002) and served as conceptual framework for this study. Rhodes (2002) suggested that minority boys are targeted for mentoring programs due to the huge dropout rates in secondary schools. Utilizing this framework, the study examined the attitudes, perceptions, and feelings of all stakeholders who are impacted by mentoring programs for minority male students.

Table 2

Mentor Survey Results

Question content	Responses	Number of Mentors	Percentage of Mentors	Valid %	Cumulative %
Mentor age	35-39	1	5. 0	5. 0	5. 0
	40-44	6	30. 0	30. 0	35. 0
	45-49	5	25. 0	25. 0	60. 0
	50-54	3	15. 0	15. 0	75. 0
	55-59	2	10. 0	10. 0	85. 0
	60-64	3	15. 0	15. 0	100. 0
	Total	20	100. 0	100. 0	
Volunteer for program	No	3	15. 0	15. 0	15. 0
	Yes	17	85. 0	85. 0	85. 0
	Total	20	100. 0	100. 0	100. 0
Mentor experience in other programs	No	7	35. 0	35. 0	15. 0
	Yes	13	65. 0	65. 0	100. 0
	Total	20	100. 0	100. 0	
Involved in planning and evaluating program	No	2	10. 0	10. 0	10. 0
	Yes	18	90. 0	90. 0	100. 0
	Total	20	100. 0	100. 0	
Helpful to students	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100. 0
Good role model	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100. 0
View as positive influence	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100. 0
Program recruits good role models	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100. 0
Students take advantage of benefits	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100. 0
Recommend the program	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0	100. 0
Race					
Black		18	90. 0	90. 0	90. 0
Latino		2	10. 0	10. 0	10. 0
Total		20	100. 0	100. 0	100. 0

Research Question 3

This question was addressed by the Student Survey (see Appendix A) and indicated students' perceptions of the 5000 Role Models Project. Table 3 reflects all of the questions that explored how students felt about the mentoring program. Nine eighth-grade students enrolled in the program were Latino and 11 were African American (Table 3). In addition to activities within the 5000 Role Model of Excellence Project, all students were enrolled in other activities outside of the project. Most of the students in the program had been involved with mentoring for at least 2 years.

The students were well aware of the programs and activities of the 5000 Role Models Project. The average enrollment for these students in the program was 2 years. All students were aware of the benefits that the project had to offer and all of those involved took advantage of these options. Most students were recommended by a parent or teacher to participate in the project. The students indicated that the mentors helped them to perform better in the school environment. All students stated they were informed of the long and short term goals of the program, and information was given to them about student meetings throughout the school year. The project provided learning opportunities for students both in and out of school. All of the students agreed that the project had a positive impact on their lives.

Table 3

Student Survey Results

_____

Statement responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %

_____

Statement responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Age	12-15	18	80.0	80.0
	16-18	2	100. 0	100. 0
Involvement with program	Yes	20	100.0	100. 0
Aware of activities	Yes	20	100. 0	100. 0
Recommended by parent or teacher	Parent	15	75. 0	75. 0
	Mentor	5	25. 0	100. 0
	Total	20	100. 0	100.0
Mentor Assistance	Yes	20	100.0	100.0
Long term/Short time goals	Yes	20	100. 0	100.0
Informed of meetings	Yes	20	100. 0	100.0
Participation in activities	Yes	20	100.0	100.0
Learning Opportunities	Yes	20	100. 0	100.0
Positive Impact	Yes	20	100. 0	100.0

Table 4

Focus Group Results: Parents and Mentors

Topic	Responses	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Help child with achievement	Yes	100.0	100.0	100.0
Resources provide support	Yes	100.0	100.0	100 0
Provides good role models	Yes	100.0	100.0	100.0
Need for mentoring in middle school	Yes	100.0	100.0	100.0
Continued involvement beyond middle school	Yes	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 5

Focus Group Results: Students

Topic	Responses	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Help with achievement	Yes	100.0	100.0	100.0
Resources provide support	Yes	100.0	100.0	100.0
Provides good role models	Yes	100.0	100.0	100.0
Need for mentoring in middle school	Yes	100.0	100.0	100.0
Continued involvement beyond middle school	Yes	100.0	100.0	100.0

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of the Applied Dissertation

The purpose of the study was to (a) determine if there was improvement in graduation rates for minority male students enrolled in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project as compared to minority male students who were not enrolled, (b) determine the degree to which parents and mentors were satisfied with the program, and (c) determine the participants' perceptions of the program and its impact on them. Twenty eighth-grade students participated in the program. Eighty eighth-grade students did not participate in the program. Data were collected from the school's database as well as from mentors, students, and their parents.

Elaboration and Interpretation of Findings

The results of the study supported that there may be a need for a mentoring program to assist minority males to achieve academic success in school. This research focused on a small group of eighth-grade minority students in one middle school. This study was based on mentoring research conducted by Morgan (2010), who concluded that school leaders have been advised to consider eliminating racial disparities and to reach out to community organizations and other support groups that can help students of color to achieve academic success. Morgan found that minority students needed more support to be successful in school than their counterparts. Despite the small sample size and the limited depth of study, young adults who were minorities involved in the mentoring program that was the focus of this study demonstrated a 100% graduation rate and promotion to the ninth grade. Regardless of their racial background, parents of adolescents in the mentoring program were appreciative and recognized the value of a

program that would help their children to achieve success in school. Banks (2006)

believed that understanding a student's cultural background is the key to academic

success for minority males.

Relationships of Findings

The findings of the study suggested it is important to consider factors such as

satisfaction and perception when understanding the impact of mentoring on the

graduation rates of minority eighth-grade male students who participated in the program.

Although further investigation is needed to understand the differences of educational

achievement for minority male students, school staff can begin to utilize what is known

about the differences in achievement gaps of minority male students in order to serve

them better. A large achievement gap among students is evident along the lines of race,

gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Morgan, 2010). It would be recommended

that mentor programs in schools direct greater attention toward those problems.

The findings of this study addressed the three research questions. The first

question found that the students who participated in the program showed a higher

graduation rate than those who were not involved in the program. The second question

found through the responses by mentors and parents that they regarded the program

highly. The third question indicated students' perceptions of the program and all

responses were favorable. Literature from the research addressed several areas of the

questions which included: academic enhancement, achievement gaps, school quality,

school connection, and cultural connection.

The researcher participated in panel and group discussions in Washington, D. C.

that were hosted by the Congressional Black Caucus. These discussions involved how to

educate minority males in schools, how to equip minority males for success, and how nonprofit organizations can come together to make meaningful changes in their lives. Senator Wilson was also involved in these group and panel discussions, which focused on how mentors should work closely with schools to assist students in achieving their dreams and desired goals. Some students who were in the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project attended these sessions that were conducted by the director of the program. The students were able to discuss their satisfaction and perception of the program. Discussions took place that addressed various issues of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project currently being reviewed and the program being implemented in several states across America. Through these discussions it was found that positive role models are needed for minority males and to promote student success in school.

The findings of this study also indicated that mentoring programs created at the local, state, and national levels are needed to assist minority male students. These programs began with President Obama's initiative to provide safe learning environments and mentoring programs for all students. The 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project focus and panel group discussions concentrated on what needs to be done in local communities to save our young minority males; however, since this applied dissertation study was directed toward measuring graduation rates, the content of this expanded discussion was not specifically detailed in this report. Several educators, parents, and community leaders entered a small focus group discussion. They concurred that Senator Wilson's 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project is needed to bring awareness to the community, the nation, and the world.

More educators are exploring research-based material on mentoring programs

with minority male students in a variety of contexts (Morgan, 2010). Consequently, better results should be achieved in helping them to achieve academic success in school. One way to improve educational outcomes for minority male students might be the exploration of culturally alternative environments such as mentoring for minority male students by educators in schools (Elias, 2013). The way mentors relate to students of color in schools is critical in helping them to achieve success in and out of school. Research suggested that mentors should be role models and be able to relate to students on a social, emotional and cultural level (Elias, 2013). Thus, academic achievement is linked to middle school success with students who are mentored and stay on the right track (Morgan, 2010). There was also a link between academic enhancement programs and the improvement of graduation rates at the middle school level (Florida Department of Education, 2002).

Implications of Findings

The findings of this study have several implications for educators. Although more research is needed, the results suggest that mentor involvement with minority male students creates positive outcomes related to their academic achievement. The program focuses on the issues of minority males who do not have a father figure in their lives. This is just one of the many mentoring programs that help to boost the self-image, social skills, and academic achievement of minority students**.** Also, it suggests that minority male students who are involved in mentoring programs appear to benefit more in school than those students not involved in a program. The findings of the study can assist minority male students with improving their eighth-grade graduation rates over a period of time.

Limitations of the Study

There are several major limitations to this study. The impact of mentoring programs on minority male students in eighth grade was the core of this research. The participants of this study were chosen based on the convenience method, and this applied dissertation study was limited to one middle school. The 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project was selected for this study from a pool of three mentoring programs because it addresses the needs of local minorities. Given the small sample and the implementation of the study at only one site as well as other limitations described below, the results of this study are not generalizable. The small sample size, could have affected the results of the survey. To increase the sample size, sixth-grade and seventh-grade students could have been involved with the study because they were also enrolled in the project at the urban middle school. Other limitations were the target population and the location of the project since the study did not apply to other groups in the school, other schools in the district, or schools in other locations. The findings were limited to the population of this study, although individual readers may make their own judgments regarding this research.

A major limitation was the nature of the questions in the surveys and the focus group questions. These questions elicited a "yes," "no," or "I don't know" response and could have been phrased in an open-question format to elicit rich data that provided details about student, parent, and mentor experience. Another major limitation was that no data were collected about the implementation of the program. Data should have included student participation and attendance at the activities and field trips, the degree of parent participation, students' attendance at the researcher's mentoring sessions, and

observational notes about the implementation process. Without these data, there is no empirical evidence of the extent to which the program was actually implemented, including the extent to which each of the 20 students and mentors participated. Thus, extreme caution must be taken in interpreting any results. The participants may have encountered several unforeseen circumstances that could have undermined the results of the students, such as parents or guardians who worked long hours and were not able to be fully involved with the mentoring program.

Recommendations for Further Study

Given the achievement gap that exists between minority students and other subgroups of adolescents in the southeastern part of the United States, the results from this study are important. Based on the research results and the literature review on this topic, it is recommended that more research needs to be done on mentoring programs and achievement levels in schools. Many minority male students are underperforming academically at the middle school level. The research can help to determine why parental and mentor involvement have strong influences on the academic achievement of minority males.

This study should not be replicated in its present form. It is recommended that future studies be conducted over a longer period of time, involve a larger number of participants, and include a design to overcome the major limitations described above. This will allow the researcher to determine more findings between mentoring programs and achievement. Another component that may have been added in this study was mentors interacting online with students who may have needed additional assistance outside of school. Also, more mentors should have been utilized at the school site level to

work with the students enrolled in the program.

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Appendix A

Student Survey

Student Survey

Directions: Please answer each prompt as it applies to you.

1. What is your current age?
    _____ 12-15
    _____ 15-18

2. I am involved with the 5000 Role Models program.
    _____ Yes
    _____ No
    _____ I don't know

3. I am aware of the activities that the program offers.
    _____ Yes
    _____ No
    _____ I don't know

4. My parent or teacher recommended that I join the program.
    _____ Yes
    _____ No
    _____ I don't know

5. My mentor helps me be a better student in school.
    _____ Yes
    _____ No
    _____ I don't know

6. I was informed of the long-term and short-term goals of the program.
    _____ Yes
    _____ No
    _____ I don't know

7. I am informed of the student meetings that relate to the program.
    _____ Yes
    _____ No
    _____ I don't know

8. I participate in all activities related to the program.
    _____ Yes
    _____ No
    _____ I don't know

9. This program provides learning opportunities for me.
    _____ Yes
    _____ No

_____ I don't know

10. This program has a positive impact on my life.
     _____ Yes
     _____ No
     _ ____ I don't know

11. If you would like to include details about any questions above, please comment below.

   _____

Appendix B

Participation Form

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am doing a research study for my dissertation for my doctoral degree at Nova Southeastern University on Mentoring Programs in Secondary Schools. Please assist me in this project by filling out the surveys that will be sent home in the near future. Each survey is anonymous, discrete, and time sensitive. Please return the completed survey in the enclosed envelope within five to ten days.

A drawing will be held for students of every participating parent for Burger King gift certificates in the amounts of $5.00 and $10.00. These drawings will be held during the last week of the fourth quarter.

Please fill out the information and sign below if you agree to participate in this study. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this research effort.

Sincerely,

Khalifa Stanford

Yes, I will participate in this study.

Parent/GuardianName_____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Your Child's Name: _____

Appendix C

Parent Survey

Parent Survey

Directions: Please answer each question as it applies to you.

1. Please indicate the role that best describes your relationship with the middle school student.
    ____ Parent
    ____ Guardian
    ____ Other (Specify):_____

2. I am involved with the 5000 Role Models program.
    ____ Yes
    ____ No
    ____ I don't know

3. I am aware of the activities that my child is involved with as they relate to this program.
    ____ Yes
    ____ No
    ____ I don't know

4. I was informed in writing by my child's school about how this program will benefit my child.
    ____ Yes
    ____ No
    ____ I don't know

5. My child's mentor helps me to assist my child to be a better student in school.
    ____ Yes
    ____ No
    ____ I don't know

6. I was informed of the long term and short term goals of the program.
    ____ Yes
    ____ No
    ____ I don't know

7. I am informed of the meetings for parents as they relate to the program.
    ____ Yes
    ____ No
    ____ I don't know

8. Parents are included in the planning and implementation of this program.
   ____ Yes
   ____ No
   ____ I don't know

9. This program provides learning opportunities for my child.
   ____ Yes
   ____ No
   ____ I don't know

10. This program has a positive impact on my child's life.
    ____ Yes
    ____ No
    ____ I don't know

11. If you would like to include further details on any question above, please leave a comment below.

    _____

Appendix D

Mentor Survey

Mentor Survey

Directions: Please check the selection that most closely matches your response for each item.

1. What is your current age?
   ____ 15-19
   ____ 20-24
   ____ 25-29
   ____ 30-34
   ____ 35-39
   ____ 40-44
   ____ 45-49
   ____ 50-54
   ____ 55-59
   ____ 60-64
   ____ 65-69
   ____ 70-74
   ____ 75-79
   ____ 80+

2. Do you volunteer on regular basis with the program?
   ____ Yes
   ____ No
   ____ I don't know

3. Do you have any volunteer experience with other mentoring programs?
   ____ Yes
   ____ No
   ____ I don't know

4. As a mentor, have you been involved in planning and evaluating the program?
   ____ Yes
   ____ No
   ____ I don't know

5. As a mentor, do you see this program as being helpful to minority males in middle schools?
   ____ Yes
   ____ No
   ____ I don't know

6. Do the students involved in the program see you as a role model?

____ Yes

____ No

____ I don't know

7. Do parents view you as a positive influence in their child's life?

____ Yes

____ No

____ I don't know

8. Do you believe that the program recruits good role models?

____ Yes

____ No

____ I don't know

9. Are the students taking advantage of the benefits offered by this program?

____ Yes

____ No

____ I don't know

10. Would you recommend this program to other adults who want to be future mentors?

____ Yes

____ No

____ I don't know

11. If you would like to further details on any question above, please leave a comment below.

_____

Appendix E

Parent/Mentor Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions for Parents and Mentors

Directions: Please answer each question as it applies to you.

      1. Does the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project help students to achieve success in school?

      2. Do the resources of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project provide additional support for students?

      3. Does the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project provide good role models for students?

      4. Is there a need for this type of mentoring project in middle school?

      5. Will you continue to be involved with the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project?

Appendix F

Student Focus Group Questions

Student Focus Group Questions

Directions: Please answer each question as it applies to you.

      1. Does the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project help you to achieve success in school?

      2. Do the resources of the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project provide you with additional support?

      3. Does the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project provide a good role model for you?

      4. Is there a need for this type of mentoring project in your middle school?

      5. Will you continue to be involved with the 5000 Role Models of Excellence Project?