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The Socialization and Academic Engagement of Black Males in a Christian High School

David Flowers
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Walden University

College of Education

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David Flowers

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2020

Abstract

The Socialization and Academic Engagement of Black Males in a Christian High School

by

David Flowers

MA, Wayne State University, 2003

BS, Western Michigan University, 1996

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2020

Abstract

Black males in a metropolitan private Christian high school (PCHS) in the Midwest encounter unique sociocultural experiences that may be associated with racial microaggressions and the struggles of fitting in that can negatively impact academic success. The problem that was addressed in this study was the need for more specific information on how Black males fit socially into the local PCHS, and their attitudes towards academic achievement. Bandura's self-efficacy theory and Tajfel's social identity theory were used in this case study to explore the sociocultural experiences of 6 former Black male students and 5 members of the school staff. The research questions focused on the views of former Black male students on their sociocultural experiences at PCHS, the school's influence on their academic outcomes, and the practices staff at the school used to support their social and academic needs. Findings from data collected from interviews indicated specific academic and social support programs were needed pertaining to achievement, social experiences, student/staff interactions, support programs and practices. The resulting project was a policy recommendation paper designed to provide information for proposed strategies, supports, resources and partnerships to school staff and administration to incorporate into daily practices and interactions. Policy recommendations include suggested changes to existing programs, policies, and strategies. The project contributes to the positive social change by providing educators with insight into the experiences of these former students from their perspective and allowing administration and school staff to provide better support and services to the meet the educational needs of all students.

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Dedication

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!” – Psalms 103:1. I dedicate this project to my Lord and savior, Jesus Christ, for the gift of salvation, and for giving me the strength and passion to complete this project. I would like to thank my greatest blessings the Lord has given me: My children, Michael, David II, Olivia, Elizabeth and Christopher, my spiritual daughter Zayle, my spiritual son Jesus, and my daughter in law Alexandria. My wonderful granddaughters, Akira, Isabelle, and Mackenzie. You have inspired and motivated me throughout this incredible journey. I pray that I have made you proud of me. I want to thank all of my friends and family that have supported me through this process by offering your prayers, encouragement, and tough love, when it was needed. To my special friend and colleague, Dr. Bernard Macklin, my colleague, Dr. Jason McGhee, and my God sister, Dr. Carol Hogan. Thank you for believing in me, for your counsel, and support. There are so many people, that I could not possibly name them all. Thank you all for being there for me!

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I would like to thank all of the participants of this study, especially the young men who shared their stories and experiences with me during this project. We are part of a special fraternity as graduates of this school, and I hope that this study will provide the necessary changes to the school for the betterment of the current and future Black male students.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

There are many social factors that exist within the learning environment of the Christian high school that can affect Black males. Racial discrimination from peers and educators can produce negative effects on students' self-esteem, self-identity, and sense of belonging (Allen, Scott, & Lewis, 2013). Conversely, positive interactions with educational staff and other students can nurture positive social interactions and a greater desire for academic success. According to Brittan and Gray (2014), teacher support has a major influence on a student's ability to adapt academically to his new learning environment, while peer reinforcement has a positive effect on student motivation, behavior, and achievement. Furthermore, it has also been determined that both academic and nonacademic undertakings can be directly impacted by peer relationships (Liem & Martin, 2011).

In this study, I examined the current social environment in a metropolitan Christian high school in the Midwest and its impact on Black male students. From this point forward, this school will be referred to as Private Christian High School (PCHS). I sought to discover how the social composition of the school directly affected the desire for Black males to engage academically and fit in socially. The general school social climate has a significant impact on the short- and long-term goals of youth that stretch beyond formal instruction curriculum (Benner, Crosnoe, & Eccles, 2015).

A detailed description of the problem, the rationale, and the significance of the study was discussed in this section. In addition, evidence of the problem from both a local and national perspective was presented, along with the guiding research questions and any relevant definitions of terms. Finally, a thorough review of literature was implemented to support the evidence of previous research on a national scale.

The Local Problem

Black males who attend PCHS may experience racial stereotyping, discrimination, and racial microaggressions from peers and school staff. These sociocultural challenges can negatively impact their desire and ability to learn and excel academically. Research has suggested that when Black students experience discrimination in school it represents a considerable threat for their educational outcomes (see Brittian & Gray, 2014). These experiences may include exposure to education from a Christian perspective, interacting with students from different socioeconomic standings, and dealing with not being a part of the dominant school social culture.

The social environment of a school can have a profound effect on learning and peer interaction among adolescents, particularly Black students who are not part of the mainstream school culture. According to Brittian and Gray (2014), schools are one social setting where Black students are likely to experience racial discrimination. Furthermore, school is where adolescents spend more time than anywhere else, with the exception of their bed (Eccles, 2011). In this environment, students interact with their friends and

peers in a culture that is the source of their knowledge and understanding. They also participate in extracurricular activities that can help develop and shape their identities and formulate the course of their future.

Previous research has focused on the various causes of the academic struggles of Black males. However, there are few studies that suggest that daily interactions within the school culture may have significant effects on the identity development and academic achievement of Black youth (see DeCuir-Gunby, Martin, & Cooper, 2012). In addition, there was little evidence of previous research conducted in this Midwest city where this study has taken place. The problem that was the focus of this study addressed the need to get more specific information on how Black males fit socially into the local private Christian high school, and how this social environment affects their attitudes towards academic achievement. Adolescence is a time in which many youths seek their own identity, and part of this development comes through associating themselves with contemporaries who have similar interests and ideals (Zalk, Zalk, & Kerr, 2011). It is in this environment that many adolescents discover themselves, their likes, dislikes, bond with peers, and seek a path for their lives. The challenges faced by these students, in addition to the positive experiences they have obtained may have significant long-lasting effects.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

Socialization plays an integral part in learning, and there needs to be deliberate attention paid to the social constructs that exist in education (Personal Communication, October 15, 2014). I conducted this study within a large diverse community in the Midwest in which a number of public and private schools within the inner city and outlying suburbs service the students. In my study, I focused on PCHS and the social experiences of the Black males that have attended this institution. According to the 2015-2016 high school profile, the school under study has students from numerous racial, socioeconomic, and denominational backgrounds currently attending, with nearly 25% of the student body consisting of ethnic minorities. Despite the diversity that existed within the school, there is segregation among the students that may stem from various factors such as socioeconomic status and cultural differences (Personal Communication, May 19, 2015). The division within the learning environment can create a negative atmosphere among students, particularly the Black males. Many of the Black male students seem to be misunderstood by their peers and staff because of how they speak and interact with other students in a loud and more demonstrative manner compared to their White counterparts (Personal Communication, May 28, 2015). In addition, there can be unrealistic expectations placed upon them to conform to the more dominant school culture. These students are expected to behave in a passive, compliant manner, and are not offered the same opportunities to express themselves as the White students (Personal

Communication, May 28, 2015). Many of these males will stay together as a group and either join in or choose not to participate in school-related activities (Personal Communication, May 28, 2015). The social climate of PCHS presents difficult challenges for Black males. There are many factors that contribute to these challenges, regardless of the diversity represented in the school. Addressing these factors may aid in developing a holistic and nurturing learning environment.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

The social challenges Black males face in their learning environment is an issue that reaches across the nation. Liem and Martin (2011) explained that students struggle to deal with various academic and social challenges daily in schools. Ford (2014) added that America and American schools become more racially and linguistically diverse on an annual basis. As diversity in schools increase, the opportunities for researching various ethnic groups within the schools become greater. With the changing racial demographics, many researchers and scholars are investigating students of color and their experiences in schools that are primarily White in their enrollment (see Chapman, 2013). With the change in the ethnic makeup of any school, the potential for racial stereotypes, discrimination, and microaggressions can occur. For Black students, the social setting in schools is where they are likely to experience personal racial discrimination frequently and in a variety of ways (Brittian & Gray, 2014; Wang & Huguley, 2012).

As a potential component of school socialization, whether perceived or experienced, racial discrimination can cause significant problems. It has been shown that perceived episodes of racial discrimination negatively impact Black adolescents developmentally, manifesting themselves in a variety of ways, including poor mental health, greater incidents of at-risk behavior, and lower academic achievement (see Seaton, & Douglass, 2014). I sought to discover how the social climate of the school, along with the learning environment, impacts the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the Black male student population.

To conclude, the school's social environment can have as much of a significant impact on student development and academic success as the educational components that are in place in the school. According to Uslu (2013), the social environment of adolescents is one of the most significant factors for their growth and development. Moreover, school belonging is especially vital for minority adolescents for the progression of academic success (Mello, Mallett, Andretta, & Worrell, 2012). There are benefits to exploring the social learning culture of the school and how it influenced the mindset of the targeted student population for this study. Research has shown that when there is diversity in school that allows for different groups to interact, there is decreased prejudice and an increased acceptance of various racial and ethnic groups (Barth et. al, 2013). It was my goal to provide information to the school administration and staff from former Black male students regarding their experiences while attending PCHS. This data

served to bring awareness to the school of how these former students were treated by other students and staff. Furthermore, the results of this study offered insight regarding the daily interactions of these former Black male students with peers and staff, as well as their participation in nonacademic activities, and the effects these experiences had on their desire to learn. Finally, through this study, I sought to engage staff to gain their perspective of the social climate and experiences of the target population. The opinions and perspectives of the staff provided validity to the study as well as another point of view of the social climate in the school.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used for this study. Special terms associated with the problem are defined and cited here.

Institutional Racism: Formal or informal organizational methods, such as policies and processes that systematically cause nondominant groups to be made to feel inferior, marginalized, and excluded while facilitating their experiences with racial microaggressions (Perez Huber & Solorzano, 2015).

Racial Microaggressions: A system of racist “verbal and non-verbal assaults directed toward People of Color, often carried out in subtle, automatic or unconscious forms” (Perez-Huber & Solorzano, 2015, p. 2).

School Engagement: The level to which students are involved in, attached, and have committed to the academic and social activities in school (Li & Lerner, 2013).

Self-Efficacy: An individual's belief that he or she has control over achieving goals and objectives (Brittian & Gray, 2012).

Socialization: A process by which friends influence one another, so that they become more similar over time (Goodwin, Mrug, Borch, & Cillessen, 2012).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to ascertain the sociocultural experiences former Black male students faced within PCHS, and how these experiences impacted their attitudes and beliefs toward academic success. Furthermore, I sought to determine from the school what practices and supports are implemented by administration and instructional staff to assist these students with being fully included into their new learning environment. My goal was to obtain information from former Black male students from PCHS between the years of 2014 and 2017, and their perceptions of how they were received in the social environment by peers and educators. I also sought to discover how they interacted throughout their daily schedules and routines with other students and staff members. Additionally, I explored the relationships with staff as well as staff perceptions of the social environment and how the Black males coped with various social challenges and experiences as they engaged in different school programs and activities such as, chapel services, student groups, and extracurricular activities.

Another goal was to determine if racial stereotypes and microaggressions existed within this environment, and if they contributed to any struggles these former students may have encountered daily. Racial microaggressions are described as common, everyday slights and insults that are communicated verbally or expressed through specific behaviors (Hughey, Rees, Goss, Rosino, & Lesser, 2017). Microaggressions are racist, derogatory, negative comments or actions toward a specific person or group (Henfield, 2011; Schoulte, Schultz, & Altmaier, 2011). Microaggressions can have long lasting negative effects on students of color, particularly in the areas of self-esteem, social perceptions of peers and teachers, and the desire to achieve academic success (Hotchkins, 2016). Perez-Huber and Solorzano (2015) explained in their research how subtle daily acts of racism can be found in the classrooms of schools and colleges in everyday conversations and interactions and are facilitated by institutionalized racism.

Through this study, I provided a greater understanding of how former Black male students of PCHS comprehended their social climate through personal interviews of the target group. Former students were able to provide an account of their educational and social experiences, and how these experiences have affected their views and pursuit of academic success. Also, members of the school administration and instructional staff had the opportunity to share further insight from their perspectives of the social and learning climate that exists within PCHS. Additionally, I sought to determine how these former

Black male students believed they needed to conduct themselves in order to feel included and accepted by their peers and all building staff.

Significance of the Study

I sought to discover the attitudes and beliefs of former Black male students who attended PCHS, specifically pertaining to their sociocultural experiences within the learning environment. Black adolescent males may experience social challenges in this new environment that may hinder them from fully participating in academic pursuits and extracurricular opportunities (Personal Communication, May 28, 2015). Research has shown that the feeling of belonging in a school can positively affect students' commitment to both academic success and school-related activities (see Mello et al., 2012). Bristol (2015) added that it is of the utmost importance for educators to focus on schools because they represent one of the few remaining institutions able to address and speak to social injustices. This study should be beneficial for the administration and instructional staff of PCHS. This research may provide a greater understanding of how former Black male students experienced socialization within the high school culture. Administration and instructional staff can gain a greater knowledge of issues, as well as the ability to develop solutions that can have an immediate impact on student experiences and academic outcomes. Furthermore, this study has the potential to highlight supports and practices that are benefiting these students with successful assimilation into the high school culture and promoting academic achievement. It was the goal of this study to

provide incentive for promoting change in the school culture through the inclusion of all students and the diverse abilities they embody. As Black student enrollment continues to increase at PCHS, it is important to investigate the sociocultural and academic experiences of these students in this learning environment. Black youth who attend exclusive, private schools have distinct experiences that have significant implications for the development of their identity and consequent educational-associated results (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2012). My study offered additional information regarding the educational climate of PCHS, particularly given the current climate of education in which schools of choice are growing options for many families. Understanding the experiences of these former Black male students is particularly important for educators and administrators because of the increasing number of students enrolling represent a group that have been historically marginalized in education.

Research Questions

Research pertaining to the academic struggles of Black males has focused primarily on the classroom setting, especially the achievement gap. According to Taylor and Brown (2013), there are various academic, behavioral, and social barriers that affect the achievement of this at-risk population in mainstream American education. It has also been recognized through research that Black male youth are at risk for a variety of different negative school experiences and consequences including school academic

failure, suspensions, expulsions, and violence (Moon & Singh, 2015). Three interview questions were implemented for data collection.

The research questions for this study were as follows:

RQ1: What are the views of former Black male students on the sociocultural experiences they encountered while attending Private Christian High School?

RQ2: How do former Black male students of Private Christian High School describe the school's influence on their academic success?

RQ3: What practices do administrators and instructional staff at Private Christian High School use to support the sociocultural and academic needs of Black male students?

Review of the Literature

The search strategies for this study included the use of common research and educational databases to obtain relevant and current peer-reviewed articles. Specifically, I used the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Education Source, ProQuest, and Thoreau databases. Additionally, internet searches for online scholarly journals, including various educational and psychological journals, were conducted. The focus of the searches was on literature and research within the last 5 years. Older studies were used to provide history and depth to the study. Peer-reviewed articles and journals that addressed the research topic and research questions were used. Topics that pertained to socialization, education, and racial discrimination. I used key words to search most databases such as *Black males*, *Black students*, *education*, *racial microaggressions*, *social*

learning theory, social identity theory, and school choice. Saturation was evident when searches generated information and sources that were repetitive.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Bandura's social learning theory (1977) and self-efficacy theory (1977), along with Tajfel's social identity theory (1979). According to the social learning theory, people learn through direct experience or through observing the behaviors and attitudes of others and the consequences of those behaviors (Bandura, 1977a). Those who are observed are categorized as models for the observer, and could be individuals such as other students, parents, teachers, or coaches. Black males who have difficulties adjusting to their social and learning environment may attempt to adapt the behaviors and attitudes of peers and teachers they have observed in order to receive favorable academic and social results. Administrators and teachers can support Black males by modeling the appropriate conduct and behaviors that reflect the academic and social expectations of the school.

Introduced as a key component in social cognitive theory, Bandura's self-efficacy theory is one's personal judgements of one's ability to organize and execute actions to achieve specific goals or outcomes (Bandura, 1977b). According to Bandura (1995), there are four main forms of influences regarding people's beliefs of efficacy. The first and most effective form of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through the mastery experiences. Mastery experiences are described as the ability to create and execute the

appropriate actions to manage the dynamic circumstances of life. Vicarious experiences provided by social models are the second form of efficacy. Efficacy beliefs are formed when people see others similar to themselves succeed through perseverance and effort. This gives the observer the belief that they too have the ability to master comparable activities. Social persuasion is the third means of increasing one's belief that they have the ability to succeed. Through this method, people may be verbally persuaded to believe that they have the means to master any given task or activity. Finally, the use of one's physiological and emotional states to ascertain their abilities is another method of efficacy. The implementation of strategies to support self-efficacy may provide Black male students with a strong belief system that can positively impact their social and academic achievement within the learning environment. Additionally, when staff incorporate these efficacy strategies into their interactions with Black male students, they may offer affirmation and support for the social and academic success of these students.

Finally, the social identity theory discussed the premise of an individual's sense of who they are based upon their group membership or affiliation (McLeod, 2008). McLeod (2008) further explained that this theory proposed that people gained an important sense of pride and self-esteem through the groups they identified with, thus giving them a sense of belonging to the social world. Tajfel and Turner (1979) described three mental processes of social identity: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. The researchers explained that social categorization is the process in

which people place others in categories to develop a better understanding of their social environment. Examples of this process include Black, White, Christian, or Muslim. Through social identification, people assume the identity of the categorized group to which they believe they belong (see Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Finally, social comparison is the process of comparing one's identified group to other groups for the purpose of maintaining self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It is through these processes that students may seek out and claim an identity to a particular group or groups for the purpose of creating and strengthening their self-esteem in the school social environment.

Review of the Broader Problem

The broader problem associated with this study was the sociocultural experiences of Black males and how these experiences affect their academic success. According to Aldana and Byrd (2015), research on ethnic and racial socialization must be expanded beyond the context of family and specifically investigate this phenomenon in the school setting. The social and racial climate of any school can have a profound impact on academics for all students. Byrd (2015) explained that for youth of color, especially, the racial climate of a school directly communicates how much these students and their culture is valued, which can have a direct impact on how much these students value and identify with academics.

Within the teaching profession in the United States, there exists a large cultural disparity between teachers and the students with whom they work. Within the teaching

workforce, there is a major shortage of Black teachers, specifically Black male teachers. It is theorized that the overwhelmingly large number of White teachers has affected the relationship between teacher and student. While Black students make up 17% of the student population in America, only 2% of the teacher workforce is comprised of Black male teachers (see Goings & Bianco, 2016). Research conducted by Allen (2015) noted that many White educators of Black males have often perceived their conduct as antagonistic, disrespectful, rebellious, and threatening when, in fact, it was often not their intent to be so. In many cases, this misinterpretation of behavior has resulted in frequent discipline that is unnecessary and unfair.

Black adolescent males have encountered various social and academic experiences with peers and adults that have taken place within the learning environment. Research on the education of Black males has revealed complex individual, structural, institutional, and policy components that have synchronously affected their experiences (see Brooms, 2015). Black males encounter more barriers to achievement than other racial and gender groups, and, consequently, they experience racial profiling, negative stereotypes, a greater instance of public fear based upon the negative images and portrayals throughout history and in the media (Henfield, 2012). Black males have been one of the primary targets of negative social imagery, especially pertaining to their educational experiences in the United States (Howard, Flenbaugh, & Terry, 2012). Noguera (2008) discussed the troubles of Black males in America, and that the pressure,

stereotypes, and patterns of failure experienced by Black males have often been initiated in school. These experiences are not exclusive to one type of school district or region. Instead, they occur in both public and private schools that are located in inner cities, rural areas, or suburban America. The researchers concluded that the sociocultural experiences of Black males in schools have also negatively affected them academically. The lack of Black male teachers in the profession has impacted these students' views on learning, as they continue to be taught by White teachers at a disproportionate level.

Racial Microaggressions

Despite the views and beliefs that people live in a post-racial society, research has indicated that racism and stereotypes are still very prevalent in school systems. Scholars have debated that subtle forms of discrimination still exist within educational practices which have contributed to large inequalities in education between minority groups and Whites (see Thomas, Caldwell, & Faison, 2009). Within the spectrum of social challenges that Black males experience, racial microaggressions have become an increasing problem. The term microaggression has been used in other disciplines such as psychology since the 1970s and has been used to explain dismissals toward people of color due to perceived prejudices by Whites (Hughey et al., 2017). It was concluded through the research that racial microaggressions are an increasing problem for Black males in the learning environment and can have a profound impact on their academic and social success and development.

Racial microaggressions are described as a system of everyday racism designed to maintain the racial margins that exist (Perez Huber & Solorzano, 2015). Racial microaggressions can be intentional or inadvertent, subtle, or overt, and are usually based on existing racial or ethnic assumptions, socioeconomic status, or gender (Stambaugh & Ford, 2015; Sue, D., Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009). Racial microaggressions are verbal and physical in nature, with examples including racist jokes, questions pertaining to representation of one's race, or assumptions about the quality of an individual's work based upon their race (Burrow & Hill, 2012). Hughey et al. (2017) further explained that microaggressions vary in form and can be categorized into three areas. First, *microassaults* which are described as explicit racial derogatory name-calling, behavior that is avoidant, and actions that are discriminatory. Second, *microinsults* which occur when an individual's racial heritage or identity has been degraded through rude and insensitive communication or conversation. Third, *microinvalidations* are instances when the thoughts, feelings, and/or experiences a person who is perceived to belong to a specific racial or ethnic group has been excluded, marginalized, or negated through daily interactions. These studies have acknowledged that racial microaggressions come in various types and categories. Racial microaggressions can also vary in their level of severity and delivery toward an individual or individuals.

Microaggressions affect all marginalized groups and serve as tools to nullify an individual's experiential reality while continuing to perpetuate feelings of inferiority

(Allen et al., 2013). According to research conducted by Hollingsworth et al. (2017), Blacks have experienced racial microaggressions more than any other ethnic minority group. The effects are intensified in classrooms in which there have been only one or several minority students present (see Carter Andrews, 2012). Seaton and Douglass (2014) recognized that perceptions of racial discrimination from Black youth have negative effects on their mental health, as well as greater instances of negative behavior and decreased rates of academic success. The researchers acknowledged that microaggressions affect all marginalized students, however it is theorized that racial microaggressions are intensified when students of color are in smaller numbers or when one student present in a classroom setting.

Evidence of the presence of racial microaggressions was shown in Hotchkins' study (2016) that focused on how Black male students reacted to racial microaggressions they experienced in their education. It was determined through this investigation that these microaggressions were manifested through discipline policies, academic tracking, and White teachers and administrators often placing the label of being deviant on Black males for issues such as talking in class, dress code violations, and tardiness. A similar result (Gordon, 2012) was discovered in an ethnographic educational research study in which Black males who attended White suburban schools from grades K-12 experienced and endured increased levels of discrimination and racism as they transitioned from elementary through middle school and to high school. Reports of consistent name calling

and the use of the “N word,” as well as other covert expressions of racism including mild aggressive behaviors and social stereotyping by their White male peers, teachers, and school officials. These studies recognized that as Black male students advance through grade levels of school, they encounter greater degrees of discrimination and racism in the forms of racial microaggressions from peers and established school rules and policies.

Higher rates of school punishment for Black males may be contributed to racial stereotypes and it also suggested that differing decisions and judgements made by teachers pertaining to academic achievement and behavior have been based on race (see Skiba et al., 2011). Benner and Graham (2013) described how Blacks and other ethnic minority students reported various types of prejudicial treatment that included receiving lower grades than they have earned, receiving extremely severe correction from administration and other authority figures, being accused of suspicious behavior in public places, and being the objects of verbal, psychological, or physical abuse from peers at school. Seaton and Douglass (2014) further explained that minority students may be at increased risk of being discriminated against by their peers from the majority group when they attend a school that has little racial diversity. There were multiple examples explained in these research studies that suggested that the various punitive treatment of Black males can be contributed to the use of racial stereotypes and prejudices used by teachers. These punishments were displayed in a variety of physical methods and academic consequences.

When Black students experience discrimination from adults in school, it develops psychological distress as well as hindering academic achievement and school engagement (Brittian & Gray, 2014). Brittian and Gray's research (2014) discussed how previous studies have revealed that racial discrimination can have negative effects on the academic success of Black students, and that perceived discrimination by African American students may represent a barrier that hinders expectations for academic achievement. A case study of teacher perceptions of discrimination in a Chicago school district conducted by Kailin (1999) revealed that 46% of teachers had reported racist comments and remarks made by White teachers to Black students. These teachers used covert racist language and discreet terms such as "other" or "those people" to categorize the Black students (Kailin, 1999). Twenty-seven percent of teachers witnessed White teachers treating Black students worse than White students through behaviors such as not acknowledging Black students when they raised their hand, administering discipline for tardiness at a greater rate than their White peers, and searched them for weapons or drugs regularly. It is suggested through these studies that language that was racist in nature targeted at Black males can contribute to mental and emotional stress and anguish. That researchers also indicated that these acts of discrimination from teachers can result in lower academic performance.

In a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) program (Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2014), it was determined that Black high school student participants reported

experiencing instances of racial stereotyping and discrimination from teachers and staff through the lack of institutional support for a positive racial learning environment, and a lack of diversity in curriculum options. Research conducted by Wang and Huguley (2012) has suggested that racial discrimination being perpetrated by adults in the schools can lead to institutionalized inequalities in academic opportunities for African Americans. Among these ethnic groups, Black students perceived more racial discrimination from teachers, and these experiences created negative feelings of being inadequate academically and can cause greater rates of lower self-efficacy, leading to greater academic disengagement (Butler-Barnes, Chavous, Hurd, & Varner, 2013). Other forms of discrimination of teachers toward Black students may have been discovered through the mispronunciation of student names, as seen in Kohli and Solorzano's (2012) research study. The study indicated that when teachers are unable or unwilling to learn and correctly pronounce the names of students of color, it is a means of devaluing their culture and serves as another incident of racial microaggressions. Because of these reported incidents of racism and discrimination from encounters with teachers and adults, it has been hypothesized that Black male students believe that they do not have the support they need in the learning environment.

Private Schools and School Choice

Within the past 25 years, school of choice has been a growing movement to provide educational alternatives to traditional public schooling. School choice policy

allows for parents to freely select between a variety of options for the formal education of their children (see Colburn, 2012). Numerous educational professionals and researchers have considered the school choice initiative to be the “Civil Rights issue of the 21st Century” (Nemeth, 2011). Many individuals have connected the concept of school choice to being linked primarily to charter schools, however, charter schools comprise only a portion of educational options that come under school choice. School choice also includes private religious schools, Montessori schools, homeschool options, and magnet schools. Many districts across the country have been trying to increase school choice options by opening charter schools, career academies, small schools, and selective schools that admit students based on their academic performance (see Allensworth, Moore, Sartain, & de la Torre, 2017). The advocacy and expansion of charter schools gained great momentum and popularity under Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama, as school choice became an increasing topic in educational policy (see Judson, 2014). School choice policies have often drawn the attention of scholars who have been interested in discovering the effects of various choice programs on academic outcomes and achievement. Various studies have shown positive results for charter schools (Cowen, 2012). There is an abundance of research literature regarding the growing desire of many communities for school choice options in different forms, ranging from charter schools to private and religious institutions. The literature illustrated the growth in the demand across the country for school choice over the past 25 years.

The charter school concept was originated from capitalistic principles that believed that competition brought about by school choice will cause traditional public schools to reform themselves by becoming more efficient in their educational practices (see Gallo, 2014). Charter schools are in fact public schools, but they operate from different guidelines, laws, and regulations than traditional public school framework (Koller & Welsch, 2017). Since charter school legislation was introduced in the United States, many of these institutions have been created nationwide. According to research conducted by Finn, Manno, and Wright (2017), the first state to pass charter school law was Minnesota in 1991. Since its inception, the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (2016b) has reported that there are currently 6,800 public schools of choice that are independently operated in 43 states and the District of Columbia, with an enrollment of nearly 3 million students. This large proliferation of schools of choice has impacted some cities at a far greater rate than others, with the greatest impact being with the city of New Orleans (Lay, 2016). A research study conducted by Lay (2016) focused on schools of choice in New Orleans where there has been a complete elimination of traditional neighborhood public schools in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. These changes required parents to choose new schools for their children. The study discovered that as of 2014, there are over 90% of public school students attending charter schools. Generally, charter schools have been created by those who have been considered outside of traditional educational establishments, such as, parent and/or teacher groups, with the

belief that these schools would not have as many restrictions placed upon them as their traditional public school counterparts by offering more specialized and alternative programs and instructional approaches (see Koller & Welsch, 2017). Research conducted by Nemeth (2011) revealed that since 2008, more than 1700 traditional public schools in the United States have graduated less than 60% of their students, where the overwhelming majority of students are Black and Latino, giving these institutions the nickname of “drop-out factories.” Some scholars have examined patterns of enrollment and have determined that minority and disadvantaged students have struggled with gaining access to school environments that are diverse and integrated (Lee, 2016). Research has shown that charter schools have provided positive educational effects for poor children, especially for Black and Hispanic students as well as English language learners, and occasionally for students in special education (Finn, Manno, & Wright, 2017). With the increased amount of school failures represented in low graduation rates, particularly among Black and Latino students, scholars and researchers agreed that charter schools present a viable option to traditional public schools.

A recent research study conducted by Yoon and Lubienski (2017) examined the growing phenomena of school choice particularly pertaining to marginalized and low-income families. Their study discovered that many families within this category selected schools for their children primarily based upon proximity to where they live due to economic limitations. These residential patterns normally fall into the category of racial

and socioeconomic segregation, which has resulted in students residing in predominately minority neighborhoods with high poverty, attending segregated schools that have fewer educational resources, and are taught by teachers with little to no experience (see Rhodes & Warkentein, 2017). Yoon and Lubiensky (2017) added that when selecting a school of choice, these families often selected a school where they felt comfortable and had a learning climate that focused on a high quality of academics that will meet the learning needs of their children. This was especially true of African American working mothers who found that their children, as being racial minorities faced various prejudices. Koller and Welsch's (2017) study revealed that there is a belief that a greater number of educational choices can benefit students by providing the means to better match the learning styles and objectives of students with the educational environment.

Theoretically, school choice allows families to select what they believe to be the best educational opportunities for their children with the utilization of public education funds (Johnson, 2017). School choice gives parents the ability as consumers to select schools that provide maximum educational preferences (Wilson, 2016). Advocates of school choice have stated their beliefs that schools will have better performance if they are subjected to competitive educational markets that will result in increased overall school performance and student academic success (Holme et al., 2013). Proponents of school choice have predicted that parents will select schools that best match their children's talents and interests. In turn, parents will become more involved, causing schools to be

more responsive to parental demands which will lead to increased student learning (Martinez et al., 1995). It was identified through literature that school choice provides opportunities for families that reside in low income communities however, it was shown that many of these families selected schools based upon the proximity to their residences and level of comfort. Conversely, there are some studies that have argued that through school choice, parents will become more involved in the education of their children while choosing to enroll them in schools that will better meet their gifts and pursuits.

Although there are many supporters of school choice and school vouchers, there are also many opponents of this movement. Critics of school choice are concerned that there will be a complete elimination of the traditional public school system, and have contended that school choice deepens social, racial, and ethnic exclusion (see Prichard & Swezey, 2016). Rich and Jennings (2015) concurred with this assessment and added that consumer-driven segregation could increase through school choice reforms, as a larger amount of human, social, and financial resources is required for any family to exist one school to enroll in another. Furthermore, Rich and Jennings (2015) explained that these resources are not uniformly available for all families. A current research study conducted by Ravitch (2016) investigated the impact of privately operated schools on education. Ravitch challenged this concept of school privatization and proclaimed that operating a school through a business model is an unwise trend that puts the education of children at great risk. Ravitch (2016) continued this argument and added that the competition,

accountability, and choice options of schools of choice displace content and curriculum while dumbing down educational standards. Furthermore, it is believed that school choice expansion, particularly charter schools, have brought about several civil rights concerns, especially the exacerbation of segregation toward specific student groups (see Kotok, Frankenberg, Schafft, Mann, & Fuller, 2017). Carr, Holley, and Gray's research study (2014) supported this argument and inserted that advocates of traditional public education have labeled vouchers as tools of privatization that will hinder accountability, obstruct student exposure to critical social values such as equity and diversity, and will lead to increased student segregation and stratification throughout schools. Research conducted by Ryan and Heise (2002) has shown that many suburban parents who are satisfied with the public school their children attend, are opposed to school choice for the simple fact that they want to protect their local institutions. They believe that the physical and financial security of these schools are threatened by school choice programs. A research study conducted by Brasington and Hite (2014) supported Ryan and Heise's research (2002). By investigating the attitudes and perceptions regarding school choice with homeowners in the state of Ohio, it was determined that the strongest opponents of school choice were individuals with graduate degrees and residing in districts with high-performing public schools. Opponents of school choice have also expressed concern over their recruitment of higher-achieving students while eliminating students that are underperforming in order to meet academic targets and standards, thereby avoiding any

sanctions or penalties under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) or any other state-level programs for accountability (Zimmer & Guarino, 2013). Another major concern expressed by many scholars has been the inability of low-income parents to obtain accurate information regarding the quality of schools for their children (Rabovsky, 2011). Rabovsky's study argued that many low-income parents cannot make informed decisions to enroll their children in higher performing schools. Many scholars continue to debate the effectiveness of school choice and research has indicated a variety of factors that may contribute to the efforts of many districts and families to move away from traditional schooling to the privatization of education.

Private and religious schools are options included within the school choice spectrum. The concept of private school choice has been in existence since before the founding of the country, with colonial era children being educated by various independent schools that were financed by local communities, churches, and charitable organizations (see Carpenter & Kafer, 2012). Private schools have also been an option for the education of Black students for many years. The consensus has been that private schools have offered better education for children compared to public schools. At the secondary level, private schools have effectively marketed themselves as the more elite option and have traditionally captured the more affluent segment of society (see Rowe & Lubienski, 2017). Berger and Winters' study (2016) explained that private schools are a legitimate option to public school education, and that attending a private school may offer

various benefits for individuals later in life. Although many religious private schools are not very dissimilar from public schools, they do integrate their religious values into the curriculum while immersing students into a thoroughly religious learning environment (Reichard, 2012). Advocates of school choice programs that expand into the private school sector have often cited the distinct advantages that Christian and other faith-based schools have, particularly in the areas of classroom culture and school climate, thereby creating an effective school community (Jeynes, 2012). Reichard's study (2014) proclaimed that religious private schools can offer a learning environment where racial and cultural differences can be celebrated through the common bond of faith without sacrificing and overlooking diversity. Concurrently, Sikkink's research study (2012) expanded upon these proclamations by adding that researchers and advocates of the inclusion of private schools into school choice options, especially religious schools, provided a distinct advantage through the establishment of an impactful school community. Sikkink (2012) further explained that this community has provided a climate committed to caring for the whole person, connect with students, parents, and school personnel through the establishment of mutual relationships, while the enhancing academic achievement and success. West's research study (2016) on school choice, particularly the impact of private schools on student achievement noted that students who attended Catholic high schools learned more and accomplished higher graduation rates than their cohorts who attended public schools, especially minority students who seemed

to have greater benefits because of their Catholic school experience. However, a preliminary study by Simmons (2012) investigated the experiences of Black male students that attended a predominately White urban Jesuit high school in an urban city located on the east coast of the United States. Through the methodology of in-depth interviews, Simmons (2012) argued that these students experienced racism in many forms, including socioeconomic stereotypes, the use of perceived Black slang, and enduring uncomfortable conversations with teachers and other students around topics like slavery. It is important to note that the study also explained that the students were encouraged by their parents to focus on education, and not the school climate. Scholars have noted that private schools have been an option for the education of Black males for decades. Some private school systems have made it their mission to provide a quality education for inner city Black youth. However, researchers have discussed the incidents of racism and discrimination that these students have encountered in these learning environments.

There is significant literature that has addressed the ongoing school choice debate for the support for school vouchers, making alternative education opportunities available to families that otherwise may not be able to afford to attend nonpublic schools. Generally, tuition vouchers are subsidies that are state funded for low-income families that ordinarily could not afford to pay tuition for their children to attend private schools (Reichard, 2016). Vouchers may cover a portion of private school tuition, or, in the

majority of situations, provide complete funding for the cost of private school attendance (Reichard, 2012). An increasing number of religious agencies, churches, mosques, and synagogues have been receiving and utilizing public funds to pay for the costs to operate religious schools and vouchers to enroll a larger number of students (Cooper, McSween, & Murphy, 2012). There is growing legislation and debate throughout the United States regarding the use of voucher systems and programs, as they are perceived to provide tax benefits for any contributions towards scholarship programs to cover the costs of private school tuition (McCarthy, 2016). Many parents are exacerbated with perceived low-achieving, incompetent public schools, and have advocated for voucher programs that would make private schools more affordable, becoming a legitimate option for many families (Cunningham, 2015). According to the Alliance for School Choice (2014), 21 voucher programs existed in the United States in the 2013-2014 school year, which covered more than half of the current 39 private school programs in the country. This included scholarship tax credit programs and special needs scholarship opportunities. Preliminary research (Reichard, 2016) has concurred with the use of school vouchers in that schools that are private religious institutions that participate in this program can serve as a partner to public school districts to help meet the overall educational needs of communities. A study conducted by Egalite, Mills, and Wolf (2017) examined the Louisiana Scholarship Program (LSP), a statewide school choice initiative that allows students from low-income backgrounds that attend public schools that are not performing

up to state standards to enroll in private schools that are participants in the LSP program. Participating students benefit from the state's payment of their tuition. As a result, during the 2012-2013 school year, nearly 10,000 students eligible for the program applied for the LSP vouchers that were allocated through a lottery system through the state education department. Egalite, Mills, and Wolf's study (2017) revealed that approximately 5,000 public school students used vouchers to enroll in one of 117 participating private schools throughout the state, with the majority of these schools being Catholic. Similar to Egalite, Mills, and Wolf's study, a research study conducted by Chakrabarti (2013) examined the Milwaukee voucher program for the first five years of its inception. The program was incorporated in 1990, and Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) provided all families of students in the Milwaukee Public Schools whose income was at or below 175% of the poverty level with eligible vouchers to enroll in private schools. The requirements of the MPCP stipulated that the vouchers were to be accepted as full tuition payment by private schools, and the schools were not allowed to discriminate between students. Jabbar and Li (2016) disputed this assessment and added that public and charter schools have considered private schools to be competition because they have various levels of autonomy and flexibility. Austin's (2015) research study focused on the impact of voucher programs on the participating private schools in the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program (ICSP). Through the use of surveys and interviews, the researcher discovered that the schools that chose to participate in the ICSP had a number of

concerns, primarily how the academic and religious focus of the school would be affected by enrolling new students, while the schools that elected not to participate in the ICSP had concerns with requirements and procedures implemented by the program. However, many advocates of school reform have argued that the increased use of school vouchers to attend private schools, charter schools, or other school choice programs will allow students to attend schools that are located outside of their traditional school districts and provide compensation for educators who meet performance-based goals (Berger & Winters, 2016). The research literature has discussed the impact of school vouchers on the educational system, explaining that this would empower families to explore other options for their children. Vouchers have been a growing topic and subject to much debate as to their effectiveness and feasibility.

Teacher Expectations and Perceptions

Studies have indicated that teacher perceptions, beliefs and expectations of students have had a profound impact on the learning environment. Research findings regarding the education of Black students have shown how teacher perceptions of them have affected their academic success or failures (Allen, 2015). Teachers are expected to conduct themselves with high moral standards for the students from a foundation of values and beliefs that are manifested in relationships with students and fellow staff, assessment practices, and curricular decisions (Barret, 2015). There has been a great amount of research that has indicated that positive outlooks of teachers toward students

has shown to increase academic performance (Oates, 2003). Positive teacher-student relationships are vital for the learning for Black boys in multiple educational settings from coeducational classrooms to single sex schools (Nelson, 2016). Furthermore, positive student-teacher relationships have provided great benefits for the learning experiences and academic achievement for students (McKinney De Royston et al., 2017). Positive social bonding with teachers and school staff may assist in producing successful adjustments for adolescents on an emotional, behavioral, and academic level (Rose et al., 2014). Taylor and Brown (2013) stated that it is imperative for teachers to have high expectations for all students, including Black male students while becoming tolerant of culture and supporting further conversation around dialogue of diversity for all students. Students achieved at greater levels when teachers held high expectations by challenging them through the use of rigorous instructional strategies, and engaging them with culturally relevant practices (Allen, 2015).

While there are numerous factors that have led to the educational failures of Black males, low teacher expectations, deficit-oriented pedagogy, and a two-tiered educational system have been the most evident components (Leonard, 2012). According to Howard (2013), many of the educational challenges that Black males have experienced have gone beyond social status and community and is directly located in classrooms where there has been cultural ignorance and a lack of racial awareness among school staff. Research has suggested that young Black males and youth who come from low socioeconomic

conditions have been at greater risk of experiencing racial discrimination from their teachers and peers, especially in middle and high school (McNeil Smith & Fincham, 2016). Howard (2013) added that Black students in urban, rural, and suburban schools have endured apathetic attitudes by teachers and received low-quality instruction. There is compelling research that has suggested that when Black students experienced discrimination from adults in school it has hindered their academic achievement and caused psychological distress (Wang & Huguley, 2012). Additional research has suggested that the negative perceptions White teachers tend to have toward Black students are established based upon racial stereotypes (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013). Subtle teacher discrimination toward students of color has been expressed in their attitudes, beliefs, and other behaviors that appear to be acceptable to others (Thomas et al., 2009). The negative beliefs of educators toward students and families of diverse ethnic backgrounds have led to lower academic expectations and have blamed their failures on cultural, linguistic, and economical inadequacies (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Because many White teachers have not been culturally familiar with their ethnic students, they have frequently relied on the prevailing but erroneous, negative cultural assumptions about their academic abilities (Allen & White-Smith, 2014). Research has demonstrated that many teachers' misperceptions about the engagement of Black students has contributed to untapped academic potential and racial differences which has led to the belief of misbehavior (Wildhagen, 2012). This has become increasingly problematic

given the fact that more than 82% of all teachers in United States are classified as being White (Henfield & Washington, 2012). Black students that attended majority White schools displayed lower levels of self-esteem and often felt that teachers spoke to them in condescending manners and interacted with them with a certain level of hostility (Chapman, 2014). Allen (2015) argued that Black males are taught predominately by White, female teachers, and many of these teachers have misinterpreted the behaviors of these Black male students as too aggressive, disrespectful, defiant, and threatening. On a recurrent basis, teachers have been found to implement instructional tactics and strategies and curriculum that have been unresponsive from a cultural standpoint. These misconceptions of behavior have resulted in a larger number of Black males being suspended and expelled from school, limiting their opportunities to learn. Black males were also more likely to report negative attitudes and behaviors that have been projected toward them by teachers (Cokley et al., 2011). Henfield's study (2012) discovered that Black males encounter sexism from White teachers on a frequent basis, that results in overaggressive responses that are misinterpreted if they are looked upon from a stereotypical point of view. Black males in particular have often experienced different occasions of personal racial discrimination in school, and they received fewer positive feedback from teachers on all school levels (Seaton & Douglass, 2014). Research has also suggested that non-Black teachers have a much lower level of academic expectations for Black students compared to Black teachers (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016).

Negative stereotypes projected by teachers or peers toward Black youth and their abilities to learn may have promoted a lower value of these students in the school setting.

(Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011). There are many factors indicated by the literature that have contributed to the academic and social challenges of Black males. These factors included apathetic attitudes and sexism from White teachers toward these students as well as low expectations from these teachers and cultural ignorance. The researchers have noted that these challenges have integrated themselves into the learning environment.

Teacher Supports

Research studies have acknowledged that daily exchanges with building administration, teachers, and other building staff play a key role in building a negative or positive social school climate for all students. Furthermore, literature has indicated that collaborations within the school between teachers and other staff can have a strong positive impact on student achievement. Research conducted by Henfield and McGee (2012) has shown that partnerships across different disciplines, such as teacher and counselor collaborations can address many of the problems that students experience both in and out of the learning environment. It has also been found that these partnerships need to consider the culture of Black males so that more effective intervention strategies can be developed and offered (Henfield & McGee, 2012). Research has shown that positive interaction between administration, teaching staff, and school staff is critical for the academic and social success of Black males. It is vital that schools employ both

instructional and social supports working communally to reach maximum academic efficiency and improve student outcomes (Warren, 2016). Subsequently, teachers are building knowledge and understanding that creates awareness regarding racial and cultural backgrounds of students (Richard et al., 2013). Black students' perceptions of teacher support revealed the strong influence teachers have had on their lives, not only academically, but also with cognitive development and identity and self-concept (Corprew & Cunningham, 2012). A recent study conducted by McKinney De Royston et al. (2017), focused on the Manhood Development Program (MDP) in Oakland, California. The MDP was an elective class for high school students, and an after-school program for middle school students that was taught by Black male teachers. The focus of the program was to improve the academic success and school experiences of Black male students by teaching them about their history from a cultural and community perspective. Because the daily interactions between students and staff are critical to effective learning, it is theorized that teacher supports can be identified and implemented in a variety of academic and nonacademic methods to contribute to the success of Black male students.

There has been increased research literature that has revealed a growing number of teacher education programs and strategies that are designed to assist educators with addressing the needs of Black males. Nelson (2016) explained that the use of relational strategies by teachers assisted in learning and academic success for Black boys, which included curricula that were developmentally appropriate and identity-based, along with

community meetings, peer-to-peer mentoring, and nontraditional extracurricular activities such as drama club. A current research study (Gregory et al., 2016) focused on a two-year teacher coaching program entitled My Teaching Partner Secondary (MTP-S) that addressed the racial discipline gap. This study found that individualized coaching and performance feedback were more effective strategies for teachers compared to traditional professional development trainings. Furthermore, the research added that through this training, teacher engagement produced improved behavioral and peer interactions. The integration of a multicultural curriculum by schools may provide a greater knowledge about diversity within social groups, provide insight into racial attitudes, and promote positive relationships among different ethnic groups (Aldana & Byrd, 2015). A curriculum that is inclusive and diverse allows teachers and students to explore and dichotomize racial attitudes and behaviors (Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011). Through this knowledge, researchers believe that teachers can better address the assortment of needs that Black male students bring to school.

Additional research studies have discovered another innovative method of teaching gaining more popularity which is that of Hip-Hop-Based Education (HHBE). The connection between hip-hop and education is not new, as educators have tapped into music and culture as a method of teaching language arts and discovering the values and attitudes of youth since 1991 (Irby, Hall, & Hill, 2013). Hip-hop theory has emerged as a resource for scholars to reimagine how they perceive educational practices. Scholars from

various disciplines such as performance studies, ethnomusicology, cultural studies, and education have begun to expand their investigations of hip-hop culture (Petchauer, 2012). There have been many positive educational outcomes from the use of Hip-Hop-Based Education that have included teaching academic skills to the teaching of critical reflection (Love, 2015). Hip-hop is a form of literacy used by urban youth that informs their social, cultural, and political knowledge. It is a literacy practice that is creative and expressive of the social realities of African Americans (Love, 2014). Recent research discoveries have found that teachers no longer need to be convinced of the use of hip-hop in the classroom; instead, they need to be instructed as to how they can implement hip-hop into their classrooms (Hall, 2017). Because of its popularity with Black male youth, it is theorized that this method of instruction can be effective in reaching all aspects of learning and Black male culture.

An emerging instructional method being utilized by teachers is empathic teaching, and a great amount of research has been devoted to the study and impact teaching empathy has on students. According to Goroshit and Hen (2016), teacher empathy is a required teaching skill for the promotion of a positive learning environment, as teachers play a significant role in the creation and cultivation of the classroom environment for learning, and includes responding to student needs and concerns. Empathy has emerged as a useful tool for the purpose of building quality student-teacher relationships that cultivate trust and establish a classroom environment that is safe and supportive (Warren

& Lessner, 2014). Swan and Riley (2015) described three major components of empathy with the first being the ability to understand the intentions and goals of others. Second, understanding of the beliefs and thoughts of others, and third, the ability to understand the feelings of others. Warren (2013) asserted that teachers who have incorporated this methodology have a greater opportunity for more favorable student interactions and engagement. Many teachers believe in the importance of empathy as a method of building positive interactions with Black male students, however, they do not necessarily apply empathy teaching into their instructional practices. A preliminary study (Warren, 2015) examined the validity of the Scale of Teacher Empathy for African American Males (S-TEAAM) designed to explore White female teachers' conceptions of empathy and how the utilization of empathy would assist them with developing positive interactions with Black male students. These combined studies suggested that empathy teaching can be an effective method of creating more positive interactions and increased engagement with Black male students.

In addition to empathic teaching, literature has discussed the concept of culturally responsive teaching as another technique being implemented by educators. There have been numerous studies that have confirmed that culturally responsive teaching with urban students of color has proven to be an effective method of teaching (see Matias, 2013). Culturally responsive teaching is a method of instruction that seeks to engage and educate students from culturally diverse backgrounds. This initiative looks to accept the

differences associated with various ethnic groups, individuals, and cultures in a way that promotes normalcy and personal and social value for each student, particularly those students and groups who have been historically marginalized (Gay, 2013). Culturally relevant instruction has incorporated cultural components to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of students to empower them intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically (see Clark, 2017). According to a research study conducted by Camangian in 2015, culturally relevant pedagogy is comprised of three components. First, academic success, second, the cultural competence of educators to assist students to grow in the knowledge and understanding of their own culture while developing skills in other cultures, and third, the development of a critical awareness that will challenge the status quo of the current social order. Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) has connected learning in the classroom learning to home experiences and native languages of students (see Ladson-Billings, 2014). For CRP to be successfully implemented and sustained, educators and schools must first have the belief that academic success can be obtained by all students (Durden, Dooley, & Truscott, 2016). Furthermore, student-teacher relationships must be developed, maintained, and affirmed. Karatas and Oral's study (2015) has suggested that if teachers would adopt culturally responsive teaching practices, and create a learning environment conducive to those practices, the cultural integration of students would develop while academic success increases. Matias (2013) proclaimed that culturally responsive teaching provides students of color with the means

to reclaim their worthiness for considerable thought of their educational needs from a racist society. Additional studies (see Henfield, 2013) have supported the methodology of culturally responsive education and have acknowledged the cultural differences, including those connected with race and gender, and have employed these differences for the purpose of achieving academic excellence for all students. A collective case study performed by Adkins (2012) examined the use of culturally responsive English instruction by two English teachers that have been identified for their successful methods with Black students. Culturally responsive English instruction is a pedagogy that was used to create a learning environment in which students are set up for success through the development of literacy skills by incorporating students' backgrounds and experiences as strengths to make learning relevant and meaningful. These research studies speak to the concept of culturally responsive teaching and the possibilities it may contribute to learning.

Implications

The creation and development of a school climate and learning environment that allows equal learning opportunities for all students is vital. This understanding of the experiences of former Black male students at PCHS will give educators the insight to develop programs and policies and improve upon existing practices that can contribute to greater academic success for every student. Furthermore, this knowledge will assist in

providing a social climate that is conducive for all students to develop their cultural and personal identities.

This research investigation was designed to discover the sociocultural experiences of former Black male students from the PCHS learning environment, and how these experiences affected their attitudes and beliefs toward learning. The anticipated findings of this study will provide key information for school officials by identifying the types of challenges these former Black male students encountered during their daily interactions with peers and adults. Through this study, it is expected that the findings will uncover racial microaggressions and other forms of racial discrimination and institutional racism. The identified challenges were major determining factors as to how these students perceived the importance of their education and sense of belonging in this environment.

I sought to understand the views, attitudes, and beliefs toward the learning of former Black male students who attended PCHS. These views were related to sociocultural experiences in the school setting that affected their behaviors, participation, and academic endeavors. There is a gap in the current literature and research pertaining to the sociocultural experiences of Black males in a Christian high school setting. Matrenee (2011) echoed this statement in that it is a rare occurrence that researchers have focused on the academic experiences of Black males regarding race and racism in schools that are predominately White and affluent. Allensworth et al. (2017) added that nearly all of the research has focused on school experiences pertaining to test scores, and there is little

information about the school effects that many families care about, such as students' school experiences that addressed feelings of belonging, feeling safe, and academic challenges. Engaging former students to gather information from their experiences provided a foundation for further research into similar issues and challenges that current students may encounter within the same academic and social setting. As research continues to concentrate on the social and academic discrepancies that exist within education, it is critical to expand the research methodologies that investigate the educational experiences of Black males (Flowers, 2015). Because of the significance of researching the challenges and experiences of Black males, it is also important to consider the total scope of educational experiences that include social and nonacademic factors along with academic achievement.

Preliminary studies (Goodwin et al., 2012) have shown that there are significant developmental changes that take place during adolescence. Uslu (2013) supported this by adding that adolescents experience increased independence from parents, a greater need for peer bonding, and experiencing multiple transitions in their learning environments. These peer groups become a greater social influence on school-related behaviors (Lynch, Lerner, & Leventhal, 2013) that affect the students' desire for academic achievement and school engagement (Hamm, Farmer, Lambert, & Gravelle, 2014). Further studies (Makara & Madjar, 2015) indicated that students' interactions with peers are significant for successful adjustment to school as well as their overall well-being while emotional

engagement in learning is critical for overall academic achievement and psychological wellbeing (Park et al., 2012). Social acceptance and support from peers have shown to promote student motivation, school engagement, and academic success, while instances of peer discrimination have resulted in negative effects such as lower self-esteem (Wang & Huguley, 2012). Research studies (Mello et al., 2012) have also shown that school belonging is a strong indicator of academic results such as achievement, student motivation, the possibility of dropping out of school, and progressive outlooks on class work, teachers, and peers. Benner, et al. (2015) asserted that the overall social environment of schools makes a difference for outcomes of youth, both short-term and long-term, more than formal instruction, curriculum, or any other structured component of learning.

Research has indicated that as changes in the learning environment continue, various challenges both academically and socially have the potential to develop. Furthermore, studies have theorized that many Black male students may feel that they lack power to express their culture within the learning environment, causing them to become socially withdrawn and isolated within their own peer group. Students who build positive connections with peers develop feelings of belonging and fitting in to the school culture (Studsrod & Bru, 2011), where lack of peer social support can cause increased feelings of isolation, truancy, and the desire to drop out of school. Further research has indicated that daily contact among various racial and ethnic groups, and diversity within

the learning environment reduces prejudice and increases positive attitudes (Barth et al., 2013). Murphy and Zirkel (2015) argued that students of color have greater concerns about fitting in and developing social relationships with peers when entering predominately White settings. Students who are not part of the mainstream culture often become culturally marginalized in the learning environment (Venzant Chambers & McCready, 2011). Studies have revealed that Black males are often plagued with a variety of social, psychological, and cultural challenges that impede their abilities to reach their full academic potential, and that schools may be considered high-risk settings for negative stressors such as discrimination (Henfield, 2012). Le and Stockdale (2011) determined that Black students perceived more discrimination from their peers in school compared to Asian, Hispanic, and White students. Students who experience discrimination, particularly from their peers, do more poorly in school, they view learning as less important and have lower levels of motivation academically in comparison to students who do not feel discriminated against (Bellmore et al., 2012). Research that has investigated the impact of school-based racial discrimination on Black students concurred that views of discrimination in the learning environment present a risk factor for positive academic performance (Trask-Tate, Cunningham, & Francois, 2014). Social challenges may include experiences with racial microaggressions and are not limited to peer interactions within the learning environment. Black adolescents from diverse backgrounds experience school-based racial discrimination within an

environment that is supposed to protect, but rather, serves as an obstructing setting, impacting developmental capabilities (Butler-Barnes, et al., 2013). Research has suggested that youth often grasp on the belief of academic racial stereotypes, and that confirmation of these stereotypes increases with age (Nasir et al., 2017).

Summary

Socialization is an integral component to learning, for youth of all ages, genders, and ethnic groups. School is one of the most relevant socializing environments to adolescents next to the family (Horner, & Wallace, 2013). As adolescents interact with peers in the school setting, these relationships will help to reinforce positive outcomes, or will contribute to negative effects that will last for a lifetime. Within this construct, many factors, such as, discrimination and other damaging behaviors and ideals can manifest themselves, providing key insight into the lives and experiences of students.

Section 2 discussed in detail the various components of the research methodology. These components included procedures for the research questions, the research design, and the rationale for the methodology. This section also discussed the criteria for the selection of participants and the protection of their rights. Furthermore, the data collection methods were discussed along with the interview protocol, document analysis, and the role of the researcher. Finally, the data analysis procedures including validity, and the limitations of the study were discussed.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the sociocultural experiences of former Black male students at PCHS. PCHS was selected as the research site because of its location, and it also has the largest population of current and former Black students. The majority of Catholic and Christian high schools in the area are located primarily in the surrounding suburbs of this Midwest City; however, PCHS is located within the city limits and is near the largest population of Black residents. As a result of its proximity to this population, PCHS has the largest enrollment of Black students in the area that do not attend a public or charter school. The target group of participants consisted of former Black male students who attended the school between the years of 2014 and 2017. I focused on the views of former Black male students' sociocultural experiences on their academic development and attitudes towards learning.

Through this investigation, I sought to bring awareness to the school regarding the daily challenges, struggles, and experiences within this learning environment that these former students encountered. In addition, I uncovered key information from these former Black male students about how their experiences affected their attitudes about themselves, school, and their desire and ability to learn. I aimed to provide information that will offer solutions and alternatives that will meet the academic and sociocultural needs of Black male students in PCHS. This section included a detailed outline of the

following: research questions, research design, participants, data collection, data analysis, and the process for establishing validity, and discussion of the study limitations.

Research Design

I selected a qualitative research design for this study. Qualitative research is a generally broad term that encompasses a variety of differing research methods (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Levy (2015) added that qualitative research gives the researcher the ability to gain a greater understanding of the learners' experiences through the use of various research methods and data collection procedures. Through qualitative research, investigators seek to understand how people make sense of their lives through their experiences in the world (Merriam, 2009).

Within the spectrum of qualitative research were a variety of designs to choose from such as an ethnographic study or a phenomenological investigation. Ethnography is a research design focuses on the collective patterns of the behavior, language, and actions of a cultural group in their natural environment over an extended period of time (Creswell, 2013). For this study, an ethnographic design was not a logical choice primarily because of the length of time this type of research would require. A phenomenological research design is a philosophy as well as a methodology. This type of study focuses on the experiences of people in regard to a specific phenomenon or experience and how they interpret that phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The

phenomenological design looks more to lived experiences of people, rather than an individual, group, or event.

For this research, a qualitative case study research design was selected and used. The case study research design is a common method of research in education that allows for the researcher to study individuals, small group interaction, and school performance. According to Yin (2008), case studies are critical to the study of individual awareness. Case study research assists in the desire on the part of the investigator to gain a better knowledge of complex social phenomena (Yin, 2013; Stake, 1995). Furthermore, case study research seeks to gain understanding into the beliefs and attitudes of individuals or small groups using data collection methods such as interviews and observations (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013).

A case study allowed for my research to be conducted using a small sample group. This method allowed the opportunity for the participants to provide authentic information in their words and perspectives regarding their experiences in their learning environment. Atkins and Wallace (2012) explained that case study research design gives the investigator the ability to explore common traits and experiences of a small group, or group of individuals within a school. Case study research also allows for the study and analysis of experiences of the target group as they occur (Miles, 2015). In this instance, the case study method identified and studied the daily social experiences and interactions

of former Black male students from PCHS, and how these experiences affected their beliefs, behaviors, and academic choices.

Participants

The participants for this study were six former Black male students who attended PCHS between the years of 2014 to 2017 and five current school educators. It was my goal to interview 10 former Black male students, but I was only able to engage six. At this time, I am unaware of the number of Black male students who attended PCHS during 2014 and 2017. This information is not public and has not been disclosed by the school. The number of participants in this study represented a manageable sample size for me while offering the potential to collect in-depth information associated with the research questions. According to Creswell (2012a), in qualitative research, it is typical to conduct a study with only a few individuals because the overall ability of a researcher to provide a detailed representation lessens with the addition of each new participant. Merriam (2009) added that although there is no recommended sample size, an adequate number is needed to reach saturation.

Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were the methods incorporated to select all participants. Merriam (2009) described purposive sampling as a process in which the researcher selects a sample based upon the potential of gaining maximum information and insight. The five current school staff had a minimum of 3 years of experience at the school. The individuals selected had first-hand knowledge of students'

social, cultural, and academic needs. These staff members also had expertise in various academic areas of instruction. Snowballing was used to select the six former Black male students who attended and graduated from PCHS between the years of 2014 and 2017. Merriam (2009) noted that snowball sampling is the most common form of purposive sampling in which a few key participants are located who then refer other participants to the researcher. Several sources were used to locate the former students. Yearbooks and social media such LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter were used along with peer networks like former teammates or informants to locate and contact potential participants.

Emails were sent to staff of various required courses and elective courses to invite them to participate in the study. The emails provided a detailed overview of the study and included the requirement for teachers to have a minimum of 3 years of experience, and willingness to share on the social, cultural, and academic needs of the students. face-to-face meetings were scheduled with several members of staff as well to invite them to participate in the study. A detailed overview of the study was provided at that time. The result of the sampling process was the recruitment of (a) five staff members who met the qualifications for participation and provided diverse perspectives in their responses and (b) six former Black male students who attended and graduated from PCHS within the selected time frame that provided unique views and insight on their experiences.

Protection of Participants' Rights

Various measures were taken for participants' rights and their protection. Each potential participant was given written information that explained the study, the purpose of the study, any risks that may be involved, and all my contact information. All participants received a cover letter that formally invited them to participate in the study. Former student participants received a consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, the details of their participation, the risks and benefits of participation, and the protection of their privacy. Staff participants also received a consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, the details of their participation, the risks and benefits of participation, and the protection of their privacy. The consent forms also included a request for participant permission to audiotape the interviews. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant for identity protection. Participants were also notified that their involvement was strictly voluntary, and they can refuse or decline to participate at any time. Participants also received a copy of the results of the study.

Instrumentation

I used two interview protocols for this study. The first group of interviews were conducted with six former Black male students who attended PCHS between 2014 and 2017. The interview instrument for the former students involved 12 open-ended questions that investigated the perceptions of the participants regarding their educational and social experiences (See Appendix C). Five of the 12 questions addressed Research Question

One (RQ1), with another five questions provided answers to RQ2. The final two questions sought to provide answers to RQ3. The second group of interviews were conducted with five current school staff consisting of administrators and teachers. For school staff participants, the interview instrument was 12 open-ended questions (See Appendix D). Of the 12 interview questions, one question addressed RQ1 and the remaining 11 questions addressed RQ3.

Semi structured, individual interviews were the primary source of data collection for this qualitative case study. According to Merriam (2009), semi structured interviews contain some questions that seek specific information, followed by questions that are more exploratory with less structure. Merriam (2009) added that this format allows for the researcher to respond to emerging views, or new ideas on the topic from the respondent. This form of interviewing was ideal for gathering information regarding personal experiences and perspectives, especially when studying sensitive issues. Semi structured interview questions were prepared before the interview. The critical review of literature guided my development of interview questions for students and staff. Existing interview tools that would serve to address the needs of the study were not found in any published literature.

Institutional review board (IRB) approval was granted before research could be conducted. The IRB approval # is 08-27-18-0353198. I met with the school principal to solicit support and permission to conduct the research study at the school. The meeting

allowed for the development of a rapport with the principal, and provided key information pertaining to the study. A written request to conduct research was sent to the principal via email. The local school research agreement was obtained from the principal granting permission to conduct research at the school (See Appendix B). All collected data will be kept in a secure, locked file located at my residence for 5 years.

Data Collection Strategies

According to Yin (2013), data collection for case study research involves a varied selection of methods to develop and implement a detailed in-depth portrayal of the case. Case study research is a design that is constructed and bounded by time and place and provides a means of discovering information pertaining to events or activities in the learning environment using multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007). This study concentrated on the gathering data from the participants who have attended one high school in the Midwest between 2014 and 2017. According to Miles (2015), the case study design is a common approach in many research disciplines and dominates educational research from a methodological standpoint. This allows for the researcher to explore deeper into an individual or a small group for investigation. Three sources of data collection were used in this study: face-to-face interviews with former Black male students, face-to-face interviews with current school staff, and various school documents such as course syllabi, strategic plan, school improvement plan, school calendars, and master schedule.

Former Student Interviews

These personal interviews were conducted individually, through face-to-face methods. Interviews with the six Black male participants took place at mutually agreed upon locations that were free from distractions and comfortable for the participants. Former student interviews were between 45 and 60 minutes, and were audio recorded. The former student questions consisted of some preidentified questions along with open-ended questions. An audio recorder, along with pens, paper, and an interview guide were used in the interview process.

Staff Interviews

The interviews of current school staff were conducted on agreed upon locations, such as school property during prep time, free time, or after school for both teachers and administrators. School property consisted of a classroom, administrator's office, or a private conference room. Staff interviews were also between 45 and 60 minutes, and were audio recorded. The staff questions consisted of some preidentified questions along with open-ended questions. An audio recorder, along with pens, paper, and an interview guide was used in the interview process. The participating staff members provided in depth responses to the questions, which helped me generate valuable data for the study.

School Documents

Documents that have been published or used by PCHS staff and district documents pertaining specifically to PCHS were requested by me from the five staff

participants. I collected and analyzed information before, during, and after the interview process to provide additional data for this study. Additionally, I received lesson plans and supporting material for those lesson plans from two staff members that addressed topics associated with racism and the Black experience. I also collected and reviewed public documents from the district that included the Curriculum Guide, the District Strategic Plan, and District Bylaws. These documents were downloaded from the district website.

Permission from the school was obtained prior to acquiring any documents that were not accessible to the public. The use of documents for data collection can result in discovering key findings and valuable data (Merriam, 2009). This method of data collection also served to gain further understanding and developed empirical knowledge pertaining to the study.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher in this qualitative case study, I was the primary instrument for data collection. Creswell (2013) described the researcher as a data collection instrument of various forms of information to analyze and present in a manner that focuses on the participants' perspectives and explains the information in a method that is descriptive and detailed. The use of interviews and documents in the research served as the means to collect the necessary data for this study. Because I was the sole investigator, and collector of data, I acknowledged and identified that bias existed within this study. I have never

been employed in the research setting; however, I am an alumnus of the school and my children attended the school.

As the researcher, I obtained permission from the IRB to protect the rights of all participants and provided a copy of the approval letter from the IRB. I did not have any difficulties with data collection, or the authenticity of the information being gathered from the participants. I do not have any personal relationships with the former students with the exception of my children, who did not participate in this study.

Data Analysis

I analyzed student and staff interview data along with school documents. According to Petty, Thompson, and Stew (2012), the planning and process of data analysis needs to take place during the initial planning stages of the study. Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) added that data analysis must be undertaken with great care and precision to guarantee a consistent research study. Data that I collected from interviews was recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed for the identification of common themes and perceptions. According to Creswell (2012b), the qualitative data that was collected from interviews was recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed for the identification of common themes and perceptions. I transcribed verbatim the collected data daily, following each individual interview.

Document analysis refers to a method or process of reviewing or evaluating documents that are both printed and electronic material (Brooks & Normore, 2015). In

qualitative research, document analysis is often used in conjunction with other methods of data collection to create triangulation (Bowen, 2009). Documents may provide a complete picture of the programs and services offered in the school and implemented by staff to meet the academic and cultural needs of the students. The data collected from school documents corroborated the information gathered from the interviews and assisted with theme development. A system for coding was adopted for collected documents that allowed for easy access to information for analysis and interpretation (Merriam, 2009). Through this form of analysis, I examined and interpreted data to discover meaning. The documents were intended to help me answer all three research questions.

I conducted a thorough and careful examination and reviewed all data in order to code and to develop emerging themes. I coded, labeled, and categorized all data, including interview data and key information extracted from documents. Coding involves the placing of text into various segments and labeling that text to develop descriptions and broad themes in the information (Creswell, 2012a). This process uncovered new findings that were applied to the study. The coding process was accomplished in three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The open coding process consisted of breaking down data to place in different categories and concepts. Each category was highlighted with a different color to distinguish each broad concept. Through axial coding, I reexamined the interview and textual data extracted from school documents to determine the accuracy of their representation. Finally, selective coding

was utilized. I used this process to move from an understanding of common concepts based on data collected from all participants and documents to uncover relationships and to develop themes.

Evidence of Quality

Credibility strategies were implemented during each stage of the study. Qualitative researchers should ensure credibility and dependability through the incorporation of specific steps and strategies through the course of the study (Morse et. al, 2002). Credibility is a key aspect in the establishment of trustworthiness. The credibility of a qualitative study is determined by the extent to which procedures of data collection, multiple sources of data, and other various strategies that produce data that is trustworthy are utilized (Yilmaz, 2013). The credibility of my study was verified through the following strategies: triangulation, member checking, and the use of thick, rich descriptions.

According to Creswell (2012), triangulation is the process of corroborating information collected from different sources of data and methods of data collection. For this study, triangulation occurred using face-to-face interviews of the selected six former Black male students and the selected five current school staff members, along with collected school documents. All three data sources related to answering all three research questions. School documents may include meeting agendas, documents related to curriculum, extracurricular activities, programming, strategic plan, or school

improvement plan, etc. Further sources may also include documentation of any current programs in the school that address Black male socialization and the provision of an atmosphere conducive for Black males to learn and interact with other students.

I used member checking to determine the authenticity of the data collected. With member checking, the information gathered, and the interpretation of that information was taken back to the study participants to verify its credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2007). According to Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013), credibility and trustworthiness can be enhanced through use of member checking during the data collection phase of the study up to the first stage of data analysis. The interviewees engaged in member checking by receiving summary notes from the interviews via email to confirm the accuracy of the data.

Finally, through thick, rich description of the data, the credibility of the study was established. Thick descriptions are deep, detailed accounts of a study that describe the situation, the participants, and the themes of a qualitative study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The open-ended interview questions allowed the participants to answer questions freely without my interference. Furthermore, additional probing questions allowed more detailed descriptions of the information.

Dependability is a key component of a study to help ensure credibility. According to Yilmaz (2013), a study has dependability if the process of selecting, qualifying, and utilizing research strategies, procedures and methods is clearly explained. I ensured

dependability by reporting the findings in detail, thereby allowing a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to achieve the same outcomes (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability refers to the extent to which the results of one study can be applied to other situations (Merriam, 2009). The findings of this study could be used by other schools or school systems to provide programs and strategies that meet the academic and socio-cultural needs of other Black male students.

Limitations

This research study presented several limitations. One of the limitations of this study was that it was conducted at only one high school with a small, specific sample size. I was only able to conduct six interviews with former Black male students.

Furthermore, my review of documents was limited because of a lack of materials available to me. I received two documents from one staff member, and I collected several public documents from the school website. One staff member communicated to me that there are no programs that exist within the school that specifically address the needs of the study population. Although there are many private religious schools in the area, the focus of this study is only on PCHS. Furthermore, I focused specifically on Black males and their sociocultural experiences within PCHS, not all minorities, and not females. As a result, the findings were generalized to PCHS and to the specific target group only.

Limitations in data collection were also present, as the primary source of data, personal

interviews with former Black male students of the school, were gathered from a three-year time frame.

Data Analysis Results

Data were generated through the use of 11 personal interviews of six Black male former students and five current school staff. In addition to these interviews, school documents were also used for data generation. The data collection process took place from October 2018 to May 2019. Each staff interview took place at the research site during their prep hours, in their classrooms and offices. The former student interviews took place in various places. Each of the former students interviewed were assigned a number to protect their identity. The interview for Former Student 1 (FS1) took place in a reserved meeting room in the local library. The five remaining student interviews took place on different days at a local bookstore meeting room that I reserved for the interviews. The information gathered from these interviews was recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed for the identification of common themes and perceptions. I transcribed the collected data daily, following each individual interview. The data collected from school documents supported the information gathered from the interviews and assisted with theme development. Through this form of analysis, I examined and interpreted data to discover meaning. The documents were intended to help me answer all three research questions.

A thorough and careful examination and review all data was conducted in order to code and to develop emerging themes. The coding process was accomplished in three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The open coding process consisted of breaking down data to place in different categories and concepts. Each category was highlighted with a different color to distinguish each broad concept. Through axial coding, the interview data and textual data extracted from school documents were reexamined to determine the accuracy of their representation. Finally, selective coding was used to move from an understanding of common concepts based on data collected from all participants and documents to uncover relationships and to develop themes.

The data received from the interviews and collected documents served as a framework for my findings. All three data sources related to answering all three research questions. This section summarized the analysis of documents from the school, as well as the interview data from the five current staff members and the six former Black male students from the research site. The collected school documents for this study included the school profile, school district strategic plan, curriculum guide, and lessons plans. Based upon the research questions, the findings were organized and categorized according to their responses for each of the three research questions. Themes and subthemes were also itemized and presented based upon the answers provided and are listed under each of the corresponding research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the views of former Black male students on the socio-cultural experiences they encountered while attending Private Christian High School?

Data transcribed from interview questions from former Black male students were the basis for answering Research Question One (RQ1). Table 1 illustrated the connections between the theme and subthemes that emerged and the interview questions that provided the information for the development of the theme and subthemes for RQ1.

There were six participant responses used for analysis from interview questions (IQs) two, four, five, 10 and 11. Five responses were used for analysis for IQ12. Analysis of these former student interview responses revealed a variety of different experiences and perceptions. The students shared their overall observations of the school atmosphere, where three of the students indicating that overall, they had a positive high school experience, with all of the participants discussing various negative encounters and challenges while attending PCHS. Some negative aspects included feeling isolated in the classrooms and encountering negative racial stereotypes. Some positive experiences reported by the students revolved around involvement in extracurricular activities like athletics.

The main theme that arose from the student interview data were students' perceptions of the school atmosphere and peer interactions. Additionally, two sub-themes emerged in response to RQ1: *Positive Social Experiences and their effects on Student*

Engagement and Negative Peer Experiences and their impact on Student Perceptions.

Detailed information of the theme and subthemes are listed below.

Table 1

RQ1 Emerging Themes, Subthemes, and Interview Questions

Theme/Subtheme	Corresponding IQs
Theme 1: Students' Perceptions of the School Atmosphere and Peer Interactions	<p>IQ2: How were you treated by your peers while you were in school?</p> <p>IQ10: How do you think the structured social opportunities of the school, like Chapel and various clubs, affected you as a student?</p> <p>IQ11: If you could make any changes to the school that you believe would have helped you, what would those changes be?</p> <p>IQ12: Is there anything else you would like to add that will help me understand your high school experiences?</p>
Subtheme 1.1: Positive Social Experiences and their Effects on Student Engagement	IQ4: Tell me about any of your positive experiences in high school.
Subtheme 1.2: Negative Peer Experiences and their Impact on Student Perceptions	IQ5: Tell me about any of your negative experiences in high school.

Theme 1: Students' Perceptions of the School Atmosphere and Peer Interactions

Each participant reported that initially, the school atmosphere and interactions with peers, parents, and staff were positive, as they described that they were welcomed in the school and treated well with no accounts of being treated poorly. One participant,

FS2, reported being accepted by a lot of people, while FS3 stated that the majority of people he encountered were kind and genuine to him. Another participant, FS4 indicated that he felt comfortable and it was an open atmosphere where he felt safe.

Conversely, five of the students indicated that they experienced occasions where they were treated poorly, expressing negative views and stereotypical first impressions about them. Furthermore, five of the students reported difficulty in class, feeling isolation and the added anxiety of being the only Black student in most of their classes. Each of the students also reported experiencing occurrences where other students would express their beliefs that Black males were attending the school just to play sports. Students also indicated having difficulty adapting to the expectations and social interactions in a Christian school, especially if they were coming from a different school system prior to high school. The participants shared their struggles with being accepted, stereotyped, and adapting to the school social culture. The participants also reported various feelings of rejection from other students of different ethnic groups, making social interactions and the attempt to make friends very difficult. They explained that the overall atmosphere of the school was very stressful on a daily basis. Two of the participants stated that many of the white students would attempt to integrate or infiltrate themselves into the Black Students' social culture by adapting musical choices, language, and clothing styles. The following excerpt from one former student provided key insight. For example, FS5 stated:

My experiences are different from others as we all have our unique perspectives. One thing that I was not aware of within myself was that what being multiracial/cultural did to me at the school. People expect you to act and behave a certain way. In the general student population, I felt like I was doing a juggling act trying to please people. I acted Blacker around the Black kids and whiter around the Dutch kids.

Subtheme 1.1: Positive Social Experiences and their Effects on Student

Engagement. The overwhelming response regarding positive social experiences from former student interviews centered almost exclusively around participation in athletics. According to the participants, their participation in various team sports programs helped them to develop communication skills, build relationships, and develop life skills. Athletics provided the primary positive social experience for them, as they were able to freely immerse themselves in their sport, allowing them to release tension and stress while participating in activities they excelled in and enjoyed. Athletic participation provided a shift in the paradigm for them toward their peers and gave them a sense of camaraderie with other students. As FS5 indicated:

Athletics was the main positive experience I got. Some of my best life skills I got from playing football, as well as developing friendships. I felt that athletics was an avenue for me to make friends. I think that a lot of my ability to communicate with others and to make friends I developed from playing football.

In addition to athletic participation, the students also reported that involvement in other extracurricular programs like career exploration courses, Homecoming activities, and chapel provided positive outcomes for them. FS1 indicated his overwhelmingly positive experience with his teachers, particularly when they served in the capacity of tutors. “I really cherished the academic time I spent with my tutors. They were the reason I graduated.” Finally, each of the participants responded and discussed their experiences with chapel. Five of the participants reported positive experiences with chapel, with the common belief that chapel helped them in their personal faith and built their relationships with God while also helping them to get to know more students. FS2: “Chapel helped everyone in the school build your relationship with God, if you took it seriously.”

Subtheme 1.2: Negative Peer Experiences and their Impact on Student

Perceptions. All of the participants reported having negative experiences with peers of other ethnic groups. Interview data revealed that students reported that they encountered perceived negative racist behaviors from students of other ethnic groups. These behaviors included perceived racist comments and peer pressure that promoted division among students. One former student, FS1, reported that the popular social gathering place for Black students was called “Little Africa” by the white students. The participants also reported feeling external pressures of being Black that they described as being manifested through being mocked with stereotypical language and questions about their hair, their skin color, and living conditions. Students also revealed experiencing different value

systems for the first time such as race and socioeconomic status that were determining friendships and peer groups in the school. For example, F2 indicated that:

There are always some people with negative and racist views. A female friend of mine was dating a white male student, and his friends did not approve of the relationship. This caused him to show his real feelings, and he walked by and gave a racial comment that sparked a lot of confusion and anger from us who heard it. I felt terrible because it's supposed to be a Christian school and we are all God's children. It was very hurtful.

Research Question 2: How do former Black male students of Private Christian High School describe the school's influence on their academic success?

Data transcribed from interview questions from former Black male students were the basis for answering RQ2. Table 2 illustrates the connections between the theme and subthemes that emerged and the interview questions that provided the information for the development of the theme and subthemes for RQ2.

Six student interview questions were designated to provide information through student responses for RQ2. The six former Black male students responded to each question, providing the data used for analysis. The findings from these student interview responses revealed several key components. Each of the students indicated their desire to attend PCHS for various reasons. The participants also reported having mostly positive

interactions with teachers and staff and offered their perceptions of academic success and academic failure.

Finally, student responses revealed the academic practices and policies incorporated by the school helped them achieve academic success. Analysis from the former student interview responses produced the theme of students' perceptions of achievement. Within the main theme, the subthemes of student/staff interactions and school support practices and programs emerged.

Table 2

RQ2 Emerging Themes, Subthemes, and Interview Questions

Theme/Subtheme	Corresponding IQs
Theme 2: Students' Perceptions of Achievement	IQ1: Tell me how you were enrolled in this particular high school.
Subtheme 2.1 Student/Staff Interactions	IQ6: How do you define academic success? IQ7: How do you define academic failure?
Subtheme 2.2: School Support Practices and Programs	IQ3: Tell me about your interactions with teachers and administration while at the school. IQ8: Tell me about any programs or activities in the school that supported you academically. IQ9: How did the school practices and policies influence you academically?

Theme 2: Students' Perceptions of Achievement

The data revealed that each of the participants elected to attend PCHS for various reasons and were enrolled by either a parent or another family member. One participant, FS5 attended private Christian elementary and middle schools that fed into the high school, while the other five participants came from public school or charter school systems. FS1 indicated that he and his mother mutually agreed that PCHS would be a good fit for him academically and athletically, while FS3 explained that he wanted a fresh start from public school. Two of the participants also had relatives either attending or had previously attended PCHS such as a parent or grandparent.

Student perceptions of achievement and academic success varied. The general belief was that academic success meant doing your best in each class, with some responses that included maintaining eligibility to play sports, getting through school, and graduating, and doing enough to pass and get into a good college. However, FS5 offered a unique perspective of academic success that he described as follows:

I would consider holistic academic success to be the ability to develop the skills needed to pursue whatever avenue, trade, market profession or just general worldview and articulate it in a manner that could be received and reciprocated while also developing basic skills to survive in the world.

Similar to the responses to academic success, the participants illustrated their varying views of academic failure. The answers ranged from simply not passing your

classes, not giving an effort, to poor attendance and failure to attain knowledge. One participant indicated that it was easy to fall behind at PCHS, and it can be overwhelming as each class is very challenging.

Subtheme 2.1: Student/Staff Interactions. The student interview responses provided evidence that their interactions with the staff were major influences on their academic achievement. Overall, the participants reported having positive interactions with teachers and administrators, with each student indicating that the teachers seemed genuine and committed to their personal, spiritual, and academic growth and success. The respondents explained that the teachers were tough and challenged and pushed them to do their best while being very supportive and patient with them as they progressed in their studies. The students shared that they believed that the teachers and their mentors always had their best interest in mind, and that they never felt threatened or that they did not have the support of the educators. FS4: “I was more like a troubled kid, and the teachers would get mad at me, but they had to. My interactions were always good. They helped me get through high school. Without the teachers in the Resource Room I probably would not have graduated.”

However, one participant, FS1 reported his negative experience and interaction with the athletic administration:

The athletic directors and those who control the athletics can be really judgmental, and it’s really noticeable. They push their kids to the forefront of

athletics, and if that plan fails, they have a whole bunch of Black kids that can play football and basketball that people will pay to come see.

Subtheme 2.2: School Support Practices and Programs. Analysis of student interview data revealed students' responses to the school practices and programs that supported them. Four students described programs that supported them academically, while two participants stated that there were no programs that assisted them. The four participants reported that programs such the Educational Support Services (ESS), resource rooms, a program known as Office Hours, where students can go to any of their teachers during the student's lunch hour and get additional academic assistance. Additionally, a two-week session of career classes that took place between the fall and spring semesters known as Winterim helped them achieve academic success. According to FS1:

I really cherished the academic time I spent with my tutors. They were the reason I graduated. They helped me. All of my tutors were women who really cared about me. My tutor to this day still helps me while I'm in college. Teachers were very helpful and open to me because I struggled every year. It was a challenge for me, but they really guided me to some academic success.

Research Question 3: What practices do administrators and instructional staff at Private Christian High School use to support the socio-cultural and academic needs of Black male students?

Data transcribed from interview questions from current staff members as well as collected documents were the basis for answering RQ3. Table 3 illustrates the connections between the theme and subthemes that emerged and the interview questions and collected documents that provided the information for the development of the theme and subthemes for RQ3. Table 4 displayed the connections between the theme and subthemes that were developed and the analyzed school documents that supported the theme and subthemes.

There were five staff participant responses used for analysis from IQs one, two, three, four, five, 10 and 12. The findings of the staff interviews revealed the beliefs of the participants of Christian education and how this philosophy of learning is put into practice, along with their views of academic success and academic failure. Furthermore, staff participants reported practices and policies that are implemented to support the academic and social needs of all students, and not necessarily Black males in the school. Findings from the collected and analyzed documents also provided evidence to practices and policies of the school district.

Analysis of the interview data as well as analysis of collected documents produced the main theme of Christian Education in Practice, along with two subthemes: Staff Definitions and Perceptions of Student Academic Success Failure and Academic and Social Support Practices and Policies for Black Males.

Table 3

RQ3 Emerging Themes, Subthemes, and Interview Questions

Theme/Subtheme	Corresponding IQs
Theme 3: Christian Education in Practice	<p>IQ1: What does a Christ-centered education mean to you?</p> <p>IQ10: How does the school's statement of faith influence the staff's interactions with Black male students?</p> <p>IQ12: Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the academic or social experiences of Black male at the school?</p>
Subtheme 3.1 Staff Definitions and Perceptions of Student Academic Success and Failure	<p>IQ2: How do you define academic success?</p> <p>IQ3: How do you define academic failure?</p>
Subtheme 3.2: Academic and Social Support Practices and Policies for Black Males	<p>IQ4: What are some of the programs and practices that exist to support the academic needs of Black male students in the school?</p> <p>IQ5: What are some of the programs and practices that exist to support the social needs of Black male students in the school?</p>

Table 4

RQ3 Emerging Themes, Subthemes, and Collected Documents

Theme/Subtheme	Corresponding Collected Documents
Theme 3: Christian Education in Practice	Documents: District Strategic Plan Mission Statement District Strategic Plan Page 11 District Strategic Plan Page 12 Restated Bylaws, Section 1.3. 1,3(d). 1.3(e) 2019-2020 High School Curriculum Guide, Pages 2-3.
Subtheme 3.3: Staff Definitions and Perceptions of Student Academic Success and Failure	Document: District Strategic Plan Page 11
Subtheme 3.4: Academic and Social Support Practices and Policies for Black Males	Document: District Strategic Plan Page 13 Document: Lesson Plan: Why We should Care about Race

Theme 3: Christian Education in Practice

Analysis of staff interview responses indicated that a Christ-centered education was at the foundation of Christian learning in the school. Staff responses indicated that a Christ-centered education is one that incorporates the Christian faith into every aspect of the school, not just the classroom. According to the 2019-2020 High School Curriculum Guide, it is the commitment of PCHS to utilize “an academic program that integrates the

nurturing of faith and a Christian worldview through the curriculum” (p.2). Staff participants indicated that they incorporate their Christian faith in daily academic and social practices with colleagues and students. The staff participants further explained that they integrate these practices into their classroom instruction where the Christian faith is interwoven into the curriculum and daily instructional content. The participants explained that their daily interactions with students are governed by their Christian principles and serve to guide them in everyday discussions and challenges that student interactions present. Staff responses also indicated that a Christ-centered education should focus on social justice for everyone, preparing students for service to Christ, and highlight Christ, making Him the center of everything they do.

The 2018-2022 District Strategic Plan Missions Statement is explained as “Preparing students to be effective servants of Christ in contemporary society (p. 3).” In addition to the Missions Statement, the school’s Statement of Faith outlines the spiritual values and beliefs of the district and serves to guide educators in their interactions with students as well as their practices in the classroom. One staff member offered a personal explanation on what Christian education means. According to SP3:

A Christ-centered education to me is one that acknowledges in all things that our purpose is a life of service to Christ. Our mission here is we are preparing kids to serve Christ, so Christ is at the center of our school. We want you to learn standards and at a high level, but we are called to service. We think about infusing

Christian faith and the Christian worldview into our content. There are different elements to Christian education. The feel of the building, the culture of the building. The way we live, are we a welcoming school, are we inclusive to lots of different people, do we model to our students a lifestyle that shows a commitment to Christ.

Excerpts from Appendix One of the District Strategic Plan (p. 11) revealed the Portrait of a Professional Educator which shows culturally competent professionals need to be “Prepared to engage with a diverse range of people and ideologies.” The Strategic Plan also described professional educators as individuals who show awareness of the diversity of students in the schools that includes race and ethnicity among other various attributes such as religious or ethical values. Furthermore, professional educators are expected to “Model through interactions with students, families, and colleagues cultural respect and understanding while also showing a commitment to justice through actions within and outside of the classroom to resolve issues between students (p. 12).”

Subtheme 3.3: Staff Definitions and Perceptions of Student Academic

Success and Failure. Staff responses varied pertaining to how they defined academic success and academic failure for students. The overall belief was that academic success meant learning the content and achieving the learning targets. One staff participant believed that academic success has a different look for each student and that it's more personal, going beyond just the earning of a grade. Three additional staff responses

included the idea of one's personal best while having high expectations for everyone, meeting kids where they are on an academic level, and stretching kids to get the most out of them but also challenging them with a rigorous curriculum. SP4 indicated that:

Academic success should mean that all students are learning at a high level, and that means different things to different students. Each kid has different levels and different strengths. When it comes to core content, we should not let them out of the classroom until they've learned the key skills that are essential. In general, there is a bar they need to hit. Individually, one is doing all those things and learning the content you need to, and the other part is developing the gifts you need to go where God wants you to be.

Each staff participant provided their perceptions on academic failure with differing responses. Answers included the student completely disengaging from the classroom, simply not passing classes, or not reaching the learning targets. The overall perception was the system needs work, particularly in the assessment and grading process. It was the view of one staff participant that the current system of assessment and grading can often times hurt kids more than helping them.

The staff participants also noted other contributing factors to perceived academic failure and challenges. The interview responses indicated that the Black male students struggled adjusting to a curriculum that was not designed to address their needs from a cultural and academic standpoint and that many of these students displayed various

academic deficiencies. The staff believed these students had difficulty adjusting to a more rigorous school when they've come from a different school district and system. Finally, staff suggested that there are stereotypes that other students and staff may put on the Black males, creating a more challenging learning environment. According to SP2:

I think the biggest challenge is that a lot of kids from the onset are behind and we are always playing catch up. Just trying to think outside the box to get kids the extra support and interventions they need earlier in their learning careers. It's critical to make sure that Black males have the reading skills and math skills to compete on this level.

Subtheme 3.4: Academic and Social Support Practices and Policies for Black Males. The findings indicated that there was a need for academic support for Black males. Staff responses indicated that there are no specific programs and practices in place that provide support for the academic needs of Black males. However, the participants reported the common programs in place, such as Educational Support Services (ESS), office hours, and resource rooms provide additional support and assistance to any student in need. In addition, the school offers RTI, Response to Intervention, a multi-tiered intervention program that identifies students who are not performing well in class to provide initial support. Table 5 lists the needs that were expressed by former student and staff participants in this study.

Table 5

Expressed Needs for Black male Students

Expressed Need	Participant
<i>Expressed Academic Support Needs</i>	
Specific academic support programs need to be developed specifically for Black male students.	Staff Participants
Tutoring needs to be implemented into the curriculum.	Former Student Participants
The school should have peer tutors.	Former Student Participants
The school needs to have math labs, a writing center, and other labs for other classes during Office Hours.	Former Student Participants
<i>Expressed Social Support Needs</i>	
Black males have difficulty navigating through the dominant white culture of the school.	Staff Participants
Social stigmas need to be addressed regarding the perceptions that Black males attend PCHS primarily for athletics.	Staff Participants
Feeling perceived external pressures from other students and judged for being Black.	Former Student Participants
There needs to be more support for regular Black male students in the school.	Former Student Participants

Table 6 describes programs that exist and the students that are supported by these programs per the views of the participants and from collected documents.

Table 6

Programs and Supports and the Students served by these Programs

Programs/Supports	Students Served by these Programs/Supports
<p><i>Academic Supports</i></p> <p>Educational Support Services – Offers academic support and intervention for students in their areas of need.</p> <p>Office Hours – Individual sessions in which students can meet with teachers to get assistance with specific course work.</p> <p>Resource Room – A required session for students with attendance issues and/or the needs to get caught up with assignments.</p> <p>Response to Intervention (RTI) – Provides service and interventions to assist all students, which includes students who struggle with learning.</p> <p>Winterim – A two-week learning experience that allows students to select a course in a chosen field of interest.</p>	<p>Students who may need additional academic assistance.</p> <p>Available to all students.</p> <p>Required for students who are falling behind in their attendance and/or academics.</p> <p>This program is available to all students.</p> <p>All students are required to participate in this program.</p>
<p><i>Social Supports</i></p> <p>Extracurricular Activities – Various organized clubs, athletics, performing arts, etc.</p> <p>Youth Culture Club (YCC) – A student club that is culturally inclusive to share and discuss topics in a safe, welcoming manner for all that unites school and local community.</p>	<p>Available to all eligible students.</p> <p>Any student is allowed to participate.</p>

Man 2 Man – A program designed to allow young men to share and grow emotionally, spiritually, and socially as leaders.	Available to all male students.
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Staff participants responses indicated the lack of specific programs that address the academic needs of Black male students. according to SP1:

I don't think there's a specific program that targets the academic needs of African American males. They have tutoring and a responsibility period (every teacher is supposed to take one). The responsibility period is supposed to catch more kids who are in academic need. Extracurricular activities that try get people engaged more.

The staff participants also indicated that there are specific staff in place to assist students who feel marginalized, international students, and/or students who come from other school districts who are struggling adjusting to the new school. Specifically, four staff participants reported that the Dean of Student Life is the only staff member in the school who works with these students and their challenges. Through the intervention supports the Dean of Student Life identifies the students in need and establishes individual support plans for them.

In addition to academic support, the findings also indicated a need for social support for Black males as well. Staff participants reported that many of the Black male students faced social challenges that stemmed from various areas. According to the

participants, there was the perception from the Black students and some staff members that Black males were not allowed to be themselves and express themselves culturally. Furthermore, the staff also discussed the views of some colleagues and students that these students were attending PCHS primarily for athletic opportunities. Staff also expressed that other staff and students in the school were viewed as being racist. Another perception was that these students had difficulties navigating through the dominant white culture of the school. Based upon these findings, there was clear evidence of the need to provide social supports to these students. SP3 indicated:

I think there's perceptions that if you're a Black male here that you're an athlete, that you came here to play football or basketball. You're pigeonholed in that you're supposed to hang out with the kids that look like you, and you get labeled. It's challenging for these students to understand the norms and expectations. Traditionally in white schools, noise is frowned upon. If you're loud in the hallway, that's considered negative behavior. I think there's an assumption from our Black males that white teachers don't want to get to know them, and I think that's a fair assumption.

Although there are no specific programs for social support of Black males, the staff reported that there are programs and practices in the school to assist students. The most common programs were the Youth Culture Club (YCC), embrace and celebrate diversity, and a program called Man to Man, that addressed needs inside and outside of

school of male students. It was not specified through the interview responses if the Man to Man program specifically targets Black males, however, this program focused on current events in the community and the world that had an impact on Black males and helped them understand and see opportunities.

According to SP2:

This program sought to encourage them to know things to navigate the world in the school and the world outside the school. In addition, there's a Diversity Day that discussed topics like racism, microaggressions and how we can take ownership to enhance our culture for a diverse school community.

Summary of Findings

The analysis of student and staff interviews, along with the collected documents revealed key findings that addressed the three research questions. In response to RQ1, the student responses to six interview questions indicated their overall perceptions of the school atmosphere, where students indicated that they had positive high school experiences as well as various negative encounters and challenges such as feelings of isolation and encountering negative racial stereotypes. The theme of students' perceptions of the school atmosphere and peer interactions was created with the supporting subthemes of positive social experiences and their effects on student engagement and negative peer experiences and their impact on student perceptions.

Six student interview questions and student responses that addressed RQ2 indicated multiple aspects of the school's influences on them. The analyzed data produced the main theme of students' perceptions of achievement along with the two subthemes of student/staff interactions and school support practices and programs. The participants reported having mostly positive interactions with teachers and staff and shared their views of academic success and academic failure. Participant responses discussed the academic practices and policies implemented by PCHS that helped them achieve academic success such as ESS and Resource Room.

The combination of staff responses from seven interview questions and collected school documents provided the information to address RQ3. The staff interviews indicated their views of Christian education in theory and practice, along with their perceptions of academic success and failure. Staff also reported the practices and policies they incorporate to address the academic and social needs of all students, including Black males. Through the findings, the interview data as well as analysis of collected documents produced the theme of Christian Education in Practice. In addition to the main theme, two subthemes also emerged. The first subtheme developed was staff definitions and perceptions of student academic success and their definitions and perceptions of student academic failure. The second subtheme of practices and policies that provided academic and social support for Black males also developed from data analysis.

Evidence of Research Quality

Strategies to establish credibility were used and applied throughout data collection and data analysis. I verified credibility through member checking, triangulation, and the use of detailed descriptions. The evidence of the quality of the data was established primarily through member checking with the interview participants (See Appendix I). Through member checks, I was able to determine the credibility and accuracy of the collected interview data and provide quality findings. Former student and staff participants received the summary notes from their individual interview and were given the opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy and reliability. Three of the former students provided feedback and confirmed the accuracy of the collected interview data. Furthermore, two staff participants replied to confirm the authenticity and accuracy of their interview responses.

Triangulation was conducted using the individual interviews of the selected six former Black male students and the selected five current school staff members, along with collected school documents. All three data sources related to answering all three research questions. The school documents for this study included the school profile, school district strategic plan, curriculum guide, and lesson plans. Finally, I used detailed descriptions of the information that was collected.

Dependability was confirmed through the reporting the findings in detail, which would allow a future researcher to replicate the study with the possibility of acquiring a

different result. The findings of this study could be used by other schools or school systems to provide programs and strategies that meet the academic and socio-cultural needs of other Black male students or can be altered to determine the needs of Black female students, or students of other ethnic groups.

Project Deliverable

Through the findings and development of themes, I wrote a policy recommendation for my project. The policy recommendation genre was selected based on data analysis. The genre for a curriculum plan was considered, however, the findings did not support this option. There was a need for a policy to guide decision making on the developing and implementing more academic and social support programs to assist Black male students. Furthermore, the findings indicated the need for modifications to the school policies outlined in Page 11 of the District Strategic Plan, specifically with “modeling cultural respect in interactions with students”, and “create a welcoming and inclusive campus and classroom for all students.”

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to ascertain the sociocultural experiences former Black male students faced within PCHS, and how these experiences impacted their attitudes and beliefs toward academic success. The target group for this study consisted of six former Black male students who attended PCHS and five current staff members of the school. In addition, collected documents from the school served as the sources for data collection and analysis. Based upon the three main themes and six subthemes revealed from the data analysis of interview responses from participants, along with collected documents, I proposed that a policy recommendation paper for the school and district is the best choice to address the academic and social needs of Black male students. There were several goals of the policy recommendation paper, including informing and educating staff of PCHS of the challenges of Black male students. In addition, educate staff on various supports for these students, and illustrate and create a positive learning environment.

The policy recommendation paper outlined the identified needs of this target group of students and offered solutions for the school and district to meet the recognized needs for these students. District administration and PCHS staff will examine the suggested recommendations for the adjustments and additions to policies and practices

and implement these endorsements into the daily operations and interactions with the Black male students.

Rationale

The findings presented within this study revealed a need for academic and social support for Black male students at PCHS. I sought to determine the sociocultural and academic challenges and experiences of Black males that attended PCHS, and programs and supports the school provided to meet their identified academic and social needs. The interview responses from former student and staff participants, along with analyzed data from collected documents revealed no specific programs, policies, or practices in place that target the academic or social needs of Black male students. My research on existing academic and social programs within PCHS revealed a variety of programs and policies incorporated throughout the school that addressed the academic and social needs of all students. Staff needed to be equipped with the necessary resources and strategies to provide effective academic and social support for the needs of Black male students. Strategies would include networking and collaboration with other colleagues from within PCHS as well as neighboring school districts. Through these collaborations and networking opportunities, PCHS staff may benefit from the shared knowledge, experiences, and best practices of more experienced educators who have had success with improving the overall academic success and social support of Black male students. Furthermore, identifying and using the resources within the community that provided

support for Black males may serve to equip staff of PCHS with the development of practices, programs and policies that best meet the needs for Black male students.

Review of the Literature

Literature was reviewed to accumulate various studies to justify my selection of a policy recommendation paper for my study. According to McIvor (2018), an effective policy paper consists of a short, concise brief, typically between two to four pages, that provides practical and feasible solutions to an issue. Because of their condensed format, policy briefs have the potential to reach large audiences through different networks, increasing the likelihood of research being read and acted upon (French-Constant, 2014).

Various educational databases were used to obtain the necessary literature to support and validate my project selection that included SAGE Journals, Education Source, ERIC, and Thoreau Multi-Database Search. The following key terms were used to search the various studies from which I gathered information: *Black males, African American students, instructional policies, policy recommendations, position paper, academic supports, social supports, educational practices, culturally relevant pedagogy, Black male teachers, community partnerships, mentoring, and teaching strategies*. The outcomes of the search resulted in 30 peer-reviewed, scholarly articles ranging from 2015 to 2019. My focus was on the various strategies, policies, and supports that may provide outcomes for Black male students' academic and social improvement and achievement.

The proposed policy guidelines will assist school leaders and staff with making more informed decisions regarding providing academic supports and experiences for Black males. According to Meador (2020), it is essential to have policies and procedures that are current and up to date for the governing of day-to-day school operations. My recommendations were actionable. The following section presented the categories of academic and social supports along with several subcategories within each area.

Academic Supports

There has been considerable research regarding the academic struggles and challenges of Black males. The former student and staff interview responses in my study indicated a need for academic supports for the Black male students at PCHS. In their research, Ellis, Rowley, Nellum, and Smith (2018) explained that there has been considerable focus on the academic success of Black adolescent males. Brooms (2017) explained that there has been a large amount of research that has discussed the challenges and issues that Black male students face in education, ranging from academic achievement, goals, student-teacher relationships, social experiences and challenges, and the development of their identity. Fergus (2017) explained that research has further indicated that through their actions and behaviors, teacher beliefs and ideologies about the students they serve can have a positive or negative effect on achievement. Bottiani, Bradshaw, and Mendelson (2016) stated that it has been theorized by many educators that Black students who receive teacher support in various academic and social manners may

have greater success with navigating the various sociocultural boundaries they encounter between school, home, and the community and are better able to cope with experiences of racial discrimination at school. The research illustrated the various needs of Black male students and the importance of support for these needs. One of the dynamics that can have a strong impact on the academic success of these students is their relationship with their teachers.

Teacher/Staff collaborations. According to Anderson (2016), researchers have revealed the need for substantial interventions and adjustments in research paradigms that lead to improved academic results for Black males. One such strategy that has been implemented with promising results has been the concept of teacher collaborations. In their research study, Ermeling and Yarbo (2016) explained that recent research has substantiated the presumption that educators who participate in collaborative practices can contribute to improvements in educational practices and student academic achievement. Furthermore, Tichnor-Wagner, Harrison, and Cohen-Vogel (2016) stated that collaborations among the adults in the school, teachers, counselors, and administrators can create a positive culture of learning and support for all students. In their study, Goddard, and Kim (2018) indicated that teachers are likely to experience positive results that can bring about improved morale and teacher efficacy when they collaborate with their colleagues. Through collaborations, teachers with strengths in some areas may provide additional support to their colleagues who are still developing in their

instructional methods, thereby contributing to improvement throughout the school (Cheng, 2019). The researchers discussed the significance of teacher collaborations on the improvement of academic outcomes for students. Furthermore, the literature discussed the benefits collaborations may have on teachers that included increased morale and value.

Culturally relevant pedagogy. Teaching methods that incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) can provide a strong benefit to students. Culturally relevant pedagogy incorporates three components that include academic achievement, cultural competence, and cultural critique (Kumar, 2018). When an educator utilizes cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching, they are acknowledging the individual cultures of students with the objective of providing more realistic and applicable content to their instruction (Ortiz, Capraro, & Capraro, 2018). According to Lim et al. (2019), CRP is culturally validating and affirming when the practices incorporate the cultural knowledge, previous experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of diverse students to improve the relevance and effectiveness of learning as it teaches to student strengths. Hodge and Collins (2019) added that educators need to have the desire and ability to build cross-cultural bridges in which all students regularly benefit from experiences in school that are culturally responsive and success oriented. Furthermore, the research conducted by Borrero, Ziauddin, and Ahn (2018) suggested that teachers can implement CRP that is impactful when they seek to gain a deeper understanding of their

students and the communities surrounding the school that can effectively identify and utilize these cultural assets in their classrooms. Teachers who competently and consistently implement CRP can encourage collaborative learning, form organic, authentic social relationships, and display a genuine connection with all students (Martell, 2018). The information presented from the research has advocated for CRP due to the benefits it presents to teaching a diverse group of students. It was agreed by the researchers that CRP can create relationship among teachers and students that are genuine and encourage learning that is natural, collaborative, and personal.

Social Supports

In addition to academic supports, social support programs, practices and policies also benefit Black male students. According to Brooms (2019), more than any other group of students, Black students are influenced by the social support and encouragement received from teachers, thereby influencing them to achieve academically at a higher level. Allbright et al. (2019) indicated that there is a growing understanding among educators that schools need to attend to the social-emotional development of students, as the research suggested that the attitudes, beliefs, temperaments, emotions and behaviors of students can improve their academic outlooks and overall mental health and relationships. In her study, Bass (2019) indicated that social support and care for students involves the implementation of policies, practices, and activities that provide intellectual, physical, and emotional support, along with academics. The information presented in this

section by the researchers emphasized the importance and benefits of social supports for the holistic needs of Black male students. According to the literature, social supports can help improve academic success for Black male students.

Collaborations and community partnerships. Another area of social support can be found in collaborations and community partnerships. According to Krumm and Curry (2017), it is central to have community engagement for the strengthening our educational system and research has suggested that it is critical to develop family-school-community partnerships to improve and enhance student success. Furthermore, Ato Essuman (2019) explained that learning takes place more effectively for children when parents and community are active participants in the life of the school. The development and engagement of school-family-community partnerships is a strategy that can be implemented to build relationships that will help families remain connected with schools to facilitate Black student engagement (Minton, 2016). Additionally, Rhoden (2017) noted that it is vital that schools build relationships between students and other students, teachers and students, and parents, teachers, and the community. Research has illustrated the importance of community partnerships and engagement for the betterment of learning environments. When partnerships are formed between schools, parents, community groups, the researchers agreed that these relationships will strengthen and improve student achievement.

Mentoring. Mentoring has been a support strategy that has been discussed by scholars for years. Mentoring programs that are culturally specific are critical as they create the opportunities to better connect with to nurture and support critical life skills, enhance safe spaces and areas where they feel a greater connection to the mentor and community (Washington, Caldwell, Watson, & Lindsay, 2017). There are various mentoring practices that can benefit Black male students. Peer mentoring is a strategy in which students can interact with one another to provide support that can provide positive social outcomes for Black males. Close peer relationships are important for healthy development of Black males, and they may bring about positive developmental consequences for these students (Sanchez, 2018, Bonsangue & Gilmore, 2018). The researchers further added that these relationships have been shown to be a driving force in the success of these marginalized students. It has been theorized for many years that mentoring is an effective and impactful method of providing additional support for Black male students. In addition to adult mentors, research has suggested that peer mentoring can be an effective strategy to provide support and contribute to the positive growth and development of Black males.

Black male teachers. Research has suggested that students' conceptions of themselves, their self-actualization, and academic engagement and performance are affected and impacted by culture and climate of the school (Brooms, 2017). It has long been suggested through research that African American students benefit when they are

taught by African American teachers (Williams, 2019). Allen (2017) stated that teachers of Black males who are predominately and largely white, middle-class, and female, regularly draw upon dominant pathologizing discourses in their judgements about, interactions with, and conversations about, the Black male students they attempt to teach. Black male teachers can fulfill many roles in the lives of Black male students, such as being a strong, positive role model, father figures, and depictions of positive masculine Black male identity. Milner (2018) explained that Black male teachers fill many roles, including that of a mentor, and that not having been taught by a Black male teacher can limit all students in many ways and can potentially deny them life-changing opportunities. El-Mekki (n.d.) added that it is well known that Black male teachers can serve as powerful mentors and advocates for Black students. Research has confirmed that Black male teachers not only benefit Black students, but all students. The research added that Black male teachers can provide multiple benefits beyond teaching, serving as mentors to both students and other teachers.

Project Description

Policy Recommendation

This policy recommendation was a detailed paper outlining the specific academic, social, and staff supports needed to address the needs of the Black male students at PCHS. The purpose of this policy recommendation is to offer the PCHS additional options for providing effective academic and social support to assist Black male students

with holistic achievement and success. Furthermore, this policy recommendation paper is an attempt to provide educators with resources and strategies to help them learn and better understand the academic and social challenges and needs of Black male students. I proposed that through providing more intentional and specific academic, social, and staff supports for teachers and staff such as culturally relevant pedagogies, collaborations with community partners, mentors, and hiring of Black male teachers, improvements can be made to address the concerns expressed by staff and students who participated in this study. Ellis, Rowley, Nellum and Smith (2018) indicated that the strategies that exist to target the education of Black males have been ineffective, primarily because of a lack of understanding of the psychological needs and strengths of Black adolescent males. This policy recommendation is designed to work with PCHS school staff to address the immediate needs of the Black male students. The potential barrier to the implementation of this project would be if the staff of PCHS would not agree with the incorporation of the recommendations and resources listed in the policy paper. Once the proposed solutions have been explained in detail, and the potential benefits to the Black male students understood, this would allow the staff to apply these recommendations to their practices.

Providing identified academic and social support strategies can help the staff to develop and implement the necessary skills and abilities for targeted academic and sociocultural success for Black male students. This policy recommendation information

was shared with the Principal of PCHS to ensure that it is congruent with the existing curriculum and policies currently implemented by the school and district. It was proposed by me that the Principal would work with district administration and school staff to determine the time in which the recommendations would be implemented. There were four goals of this policy recommendation. The first goal was to inform all PCHS staff of the specific challenges and needs of the Black male students. Second, to educate all PCHS staff on specific strategies they can use to provide the necessary academic and social supports for Black male students. Third, to illustrate that creating a positive and inclusive learning environment in the classrooms and throughout the school that would provide cultural awareness, increased learning, and improvement of the academic and social outcomes for Black male students. Finally, to create awareness and recognition for PCHS staff of the various community resources available to assist them with the educational and sociocultural needs of Black male students. The materials needed for this project would be the detailed policy recommendation paper. Furthermore, the existing supports for this project would come in the form of administrative support and implementation. There were potentially several barriers to this project which may include reluctance of the staff to incorporate the recommendation into their practices as well as a lack of training to effectively implement the recommendations into instruction and supports. The proposed solution to these potential barriers included providing staff with the proper trainings and materials to put the recommendations into practice.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The Policy Recommendation was designed to assist school staff with the ability to provide support programs to meet the academic and social needs of Black male students.

Target audience. The target audience for this policy recommendation was all educators which included administrators, counselors, teachers, and other instructional staff currently working in PCHS who provided supports and teaching to Black male students. An additional target audience was the district staff, including the superintendent and School Board, along with other individuals responsible for the regulations, laws and policies that determine daily instruction and operations of PCHS.

Timeline. The presentation of this position paper occurred prior to the start of the 2020-2021 school year to the principal and staff of PCHS. The following timeline was based upon the scheduled calendar of PCHS.

July 2020 – Present position paper to the principal and staff and solicit feedback

August 2020 – Make updates to the position paper based upon feedback

September 2020 – Make the position paper available to all stakeholders for PCHS

As the sole collector and analyzer of the data, I had the role and responsibility for presenting the proposed recommendations to the staff of PCHS. This timeframe was chosen because staff can be introduced to these recommendations and strategies prior to the start of the fall semester, 2021. Prior to the fall semester of 2021, it was proposed that the staff of PCHS participate in training to develop culturally responsive pedagogies to

incorporate and implement this method of instruction to students by the start of the Fall Semester of 2021. It was also proposed that the staff of PCHS be responsible for the implementation and utilization of the recommended strategies and recognized resources detailed in the paper.

Project Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan for this project was goals-based. The goals-based evaluation was used to determine if educators implemented the suggested strategies, identified resources and collaborations as reflected in the policy recommendations. I scheduled an appointment with the principal and staff to present the recommendations for their feedback about the feasibility or recommendations within this project. The position paper was provided to the stakeholders.

I shared the recommended goals with the principal and staff and solicited their feedback. Further, I suggested that the goals be used by the staff as a tool for discussion and progress monitoring during the school year. The goals of the evaluation plan were to:

1. Increase the number of Black male teachers prior to the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year.
2. Offer tutoring to Black male students throughout the school year to address their specific academic needs.

3. Teachers receive training during the 2020-2021 school year and implement cultural relevant pedagogies into their classrooms during the 2021-2022 school year.
4. Use community resources throughout the school year.

I recommended that stakeholders take the following actions:

- The principal and administrative staff were the evaluators for this project.
- The administration determined which staff members incorporated the recommendations into their daily instruction and broad scope social supports for the target group of students.
- The principal used the self-assessment provided in Appendix F to evaluate the applications of academic supports and applied pedagogies.
- The assistant principal and Dean of Students evaluated community partnerships and resources that are used.

Additionally, it was recommended that the goals be measured based upon the number of supports offered, the change in culturally responsive teaching applications and methods, and the number of Black male students who received and benefited from the academic and social resources. I designed a sample self-assessment evaluation to be used by the principal and school administration to determine if the goals are met based on policy recommendations. (See Appendix F). The designed self-assessment was distributed via email through the school administration.

Project Implications

Local Community

The impact of my policy recommendations for local and state school districts was to develop and implement programs and supports from the recommendations into neighboring schools and communities. For school staff, the usage of culturally relevant pedagogy and the identified academic supports may enhance their professional skills to provide more effective instruction to the students. The academic support programs and strategies that were suggested may allow staff to implement specific strategies for Black male students. For the Black male students at PCHS, as well as Black male students from neighboring school districts, these strategies and teaching methods would provide impactful instruction that they can personally identify and relate to. In addition, the academic strategies that were incorporated can provide these students with the academic support structure they can benefit from. The identification and implementation of social support programs and community resources may allow staff to develop and incorporate partnerships to provide additional nonacademic supports for these students. The findings of this study, the staff and former Black male interview responses, and collected documents indicated the importance and need for academic and social support strategies and resources to specifically meet the overall needs of Black male students at PCHS.

National Implications

The implications on the national level would involve lawmakers, legislators, and those who are responsible for the development and implementation of educational policies to lobby for more culturally responsive supports and pedagogies. The recommendations outlined in my study and the evidence it provides of impactful academic supports may encourage lawmakers and legislators to lobby for the requirement of schools to incorporate culturally diverse academic and social support strategies and methods. Through legislation, Black male students can be given more opportunities for success. Furthermore, strategies that addressed academic and social needs of students from a cultural standpoint can assist educators with developing the professional skills they need to better reach all students.

Conclusion

Section 3 discussed the proposed project of the policy recommendation paper. The policy recommendation paper was designed to detail the recognized academic and social needs of Black male students at PCHS and offer solutions for the school and district to meet these needs. administration and staff of PCHS will study the proposed recommendations and will implement these endorsements into the daily operations and interactions with the Black male students.

The short-term goals were for the staff at PCHS to increase their cultural awareness, cultural and racial sensitivity and understanding of the challenges and

experiences that Black male students face at the school. Long-term objectives included the expectation of the staff to incorporate the suggested strategies in the classroom, use the identified community resources and partnerships, and apply all recommendations to their everyday practices and interactions. It was vital for the success of the Black males that school staff implemented and nurtured the appropriate supports such as mentoring, for the overall benefit of Black male students.

Section 4 discussed the reflections and conclusions of my final study. This section included discussion on project strengths and limitations, and recommendations for alternative approaches. Section 4 also examined and discussed scholarship, project development and leadership and change of the study. Finally, this section discussed the reflections on the importance of my study along with the implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions, Project Strengths and Limitations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the sociocultural experiences of former Black male students at PCHS. Based on the findings of my research study, I created a policy recommendation paper which is designed to offer viable strategies and options to add to the existing practices, policies, and instruction methodology being used in PCHS. The policy recommendations were designed to provide staff of PCHS with additional recommended strategies and resources to assist them in providing specific academic and social supports to meet the needs of the Black male students.

My reflections on the strengths and limitations of the development and process of implementing my policy recommendation paper were presented in this section. This policy recommendation can be used to help provide staff at PCHS with a better understanding of how to give support to meet the academic and social needs of Black male students.

My project addressed the problem listed in my research through recommended strategies and supports to meet the academic and social needs of the Black male students. According to Minton (2016), it is essential to consider the factors that may impede the academic success of Black students. Brooms (2019) added that the learning environments play critical roles in how students are socialized toward education and academic success.

The research addressed the need for academic and social supports for Black male students, and the necessity for developing and implementing these supports into the learning environment. Because of their significance to the overall wellbeing and growth of Black male students, the research discussed the critical contribution of the learning environment to the socialization and academic success of Black males.

Project Strengths

My project study provided recommendations that addressed academic programs and social support strategies that addressed the needs of Black male students. Through this study, I offered recommendations to the academic needs of students through the incorporation of culturally relevant instruction and collaborations among teachers and staff. Social supports recommended by my project study include using community resources to assist Black male students, the development and implementation of a mentoring program, and hiring Black male teachers in key academic areas. My study may also be beneficial for addressing the academic and social needs of students from various ethnic groups within the school who may require additional supports. My study has the potential to influence the school environment by providing key information and resources for the administration and staff, to equip and empower them to make the necessary decisions to implement the proposed recommendations into daily instruction and student interactions.

Project Limitations

One of the primary limitations of my policy recommendation project to address the need for academic and social supports for Black male students in PCHS was the acceptance of these recommendations by the district and school staff. There was a possibility that school staff would not act upon one or more of the policy recommendations. Implementation of this project required these educators to alter their practices and methods of instruction and interaction with all students. Furthermore, the staff of PCHS needed to be open to applying these recommendations and resources into the school climate.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Providing various strategies, resources, and suggestions for staff at PCHS regarding the academic and social needs of Black male students in the school would help equip them in their preparations to deliver more impactful lessons and supports. My research study could have been a longitudinal study in which the subjects of PCHS could have been studied throughout the academic school year, possibly providing more in-depth data collection and analysis.

Another possible alternative approach would have been to incorporate several local schools as research sites for data collection and analysis. This method would create a larger sample size of participants and would have provided for diverse perspectives from educators such as, public school educators and charter school staff. These staff

participants would have provided insight that may not otherwise have been considered by the researcher.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

My work on this project study has provided me with a great learning experience, especially from the perspectives of educators on the challenges and issues related to Black male students in the school. Additionally, the perceptions and experiences of the Black male students regarding their challenges resonated with me on a personal level as a Black man and father of Black male students. This understanding of the identified problem complimented the development of my project study.

The identified problem allowed me to focus my search on literature that was relevant to the topic. I was not expecting to discover the amount of peer-reviewed literature that addressed the problem under study. There was a great amount of information that pertained to academic challenges faced by Black males along with a large amount of research on strategies and practices to assist this population of students achieve academic success.

Scholarship was achieved from my study by contributing to more awareness of the experiences and challenges Black males faced in education. My policy recommendations added value to the field of education, in particular, the private education of Black male students by providing solutions and strategies for academic success and social efficacy. The findings from my study gave more in depth

understanding of the daily struggles of Black male students in private schools, and how the recommendations addressed those specific needs.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

The rationale for my project study came about through many years of personal experience as a former student, being a parent of several children who attended and one child who currently attends the school, as well as a number of students of friends and other family members who attended PCHS. As an educator, I have experienced firsthand the academic and social challenges and difficulties that Black male students and other students of various ethnic groups have experienced and encountered daily. Furthermore, my work can be used to support students from other ethnic groups and backgrounds. The value of my study resided in the possibility of providing educators with additional strategies, practices, and resources that can equip them with the necessary skills to impact the lives of not only Black male students, but all students to create real social and academic change.

The most challenging aspect of my study was organizing the findings and presenting the information within the methodology section of the research. This portion of my research study was challenging to organize due to the large amount of information I needed to organize and present it in a scholarly manner. My study was created to assist educators at PCHS with the development, implementation, and

application of programs, practices, and resources to provide specific academic and social supports for Black male students.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The expectation of my project study was that educators at PCHS would receive the necessary resources they needed to deliver academic and social supports to meet the unique needs of Black male students. This project assisted staff at PCHS with improving their professional skills by applying the suggested programs into their daily instructional practices. The ultimate expectation was for Black male students to improve in their academic efforts while receiving the social supports they need.

This research study was based upon the experiences of former Black male students who attended PCHS and how these experiences influenced their academic success. Future researchers may possibly look to add to the results documented in this study, to offer more supports for a more diverse population of students. Furthermore, future research could investigate how additional social support opportunities within the school setting could impact the overall outcomes for Black male students.

Conclusion

My research study was developed to ascertain the sociocultural experiences former Black male students faced within PCHS, and how these experiences impacted their attitudes and beliefs toward academic success. I created and developed a policy recommendation paper to address the academic and social needs of Black male students

that were identified in this study. Research studies have shown that Black male students are among the lowest group of students who achieve academic success for a variety of reasons. This research study has provided valuable information and suggested strategies and resources to equip educators with the means to offer new and specific academic and social supports for these students.

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Appendix A: The Project Policy Recommendation Paper

A policy recommendation paper to the school district and administration of the high school under study in support of the academic and social support needs of Black male students.

Introduction

The achievement gap in education is still a major concern for Black male students, and there is significant research dedicated to their academic and social struggles. According to Rust (2019), there has been a great deal of attention and focus placed on the academic achievement of Black students.

Furthermore, there are concerns on a national scale pertaining to these challenges. In their research, Orrock and Clark (n.d.) indicated that African American male adolescents confront challenges and obstacles that hinder their future success academically. On average, African American youth score lower on tests, receive lower grades, fail classes, and drop out of school at a higher rate than their Asian, White, and Latino counterparts (Bowman, Comer, & Johns, 2018).

Although the district has defined and detailed its goals to build and educate a diverse student body, there were no specific programs to address the academic and social challenges of the Black male students.

I describe the problem and offer research-based recommendations for the implementation of strategies and supports that addressed the academic and social needs of Black male students who attend PCHS.

The Problem

There is a need for academic and social support programs for Black male students who attend private Christian high schools. Allen, Davis, Garraway, and Burt (2018) explained that Black male students in PreK-12 schools in America are the most underserved and punished student group. According to Johnson (n.d.), Black males continue to be the most marginalized group of students, both academically and socially in U. S. schools. Regardless of the identification and implementation of multiple academic and social support programs

available to students at PCHS, programs lack specific features that address the needs of Black males.

Research conducted by Fenzel and Richardson (2019) stated that when compared to white students, high school and college graduation rates for students of color continue to be considerably lower.

Further research shows that teachers treat students differently depending upon race, and these differences in behavior contribute to racial inequalities in achievement and other methods of racial stratification in schools (Warikoo et al., 2016). Research has also shown that Black students are affected by low academic expectations in the classroom at a disproportionate rate, and these Black students have been systematically discouraged from taking advanced courses in areas such as science and math (Liou & Rotheram-Fuller, 2019; Kang, Skinner, & Hyatt, 2018).

The Current Policy

According to the 2018-2022 strategic plan, the goals of the policy involve supporting and deepening relationships with the increasingly diverse student body and the broader community. (p. 7).

Furthermore, the strategic plan calls for ensuring equity of access to academic, behavioral, and social emotional support is available for students at the high school, establishing a three-year partnership with the Cultural Intelligence Center (CIC) to assess their current progress toward diversity and inclusion, analyze the findings, and implement recommendations for building cultural intelligence across the school community (p. 7). The current school policy provided for various academic and social supports for students however, these supports may be limited in terms of specifically addressing the needs of the Black male students.

Findings from the Literature Review

A review of current literature revealed that many Black youth experience racial discrimination at school, including reports of negative treatment from

teachers (Leath, Mathews, Harrison, & Chavous, 2019). Jones (2018) noted in her study that Black students are faced with a variety of challenges in school that include navigating the academic and social dynamics of the school environment. Jones further added that since these students have to function in these environments, it is vital to learn how the nature of these environments affected their abilities to learn. Additionally, Black students may disengage from school, when they recognize societal inequities based on race, as they may feel that their academic success may be insignificant in the future (Wasserberg, 2018). Black students at all levels tend to experience hostile educational environments that include unfair treatment by various school personnel, expectations of deviant behavior, racial stereotyping, and assumptions of intellectual inferiority (Gbolo & Grier-Reed, 2019).

Synopsis of the Study

I conducted a qualitative case study to investigate the sociocultural experiences of former Black male students who attended this private high school, and how these experiences affected their attitudes towards academic success.

I analyzed the collected data from the interview responses from six former Black male students and five current staff from the research site. Research indicates that student input represents important and legitimate perspectives in their educational experiences (Stanley & Venzant Chambers, 2018; Johnson, n.d.).

Additionally, I examined various collected documents from the school. This information created the basis for my study and provided evidence for the need for the establishment of academic and social supports to address the specific challenges of Black male students.

Goals of the Proposed Project

There are several goals for the proposed project. The first goal of the policy recommendation paper project is to provide information for all staff at the school regarding the unique academic and social challenges and needs of the target group of students. Second, the goal of this project is to educate and inform staff of PCHS on the recommended strategies that can be incorporated and implemented for the purpose of providing academic and social support for the Black male students. The third goal of the project is to develop and implement a positive and inclusive

learning environment through the school. Using the proposed recommendations will foster cultural awareness, increased learning, and improved academic and social outcomes for Black male students. Finally, it is the goal of this project to create awareness and recognition for all staff of the various community resources available to assist them with the educational and sociocultural needs of Black male students.

Policy Recommendations

I present options and alternatives to the current policies and practices to the school administration of the high school under study. This policy recommendation is based on evidence from the literature and collected data that illustrate the need for specific academic and social supports for Black male students.

Recommended Course of Action

The policy recommendation takes the position, aligned with recommendations from current literature and present study, that academic and social supports that are designed specifically for the unique needs of Black male students can provide greater academic and social outcomes. According to Liou and Rotheram-Fuller (2019), African American students have shown the abilities to achieve at a high level when they have access to challenging coursework and teachers who demand more of them.

The recommended adjustments to the current policies are for staff to apply for the academic and social benefits of Black male students. Some funding may be needed for training teachers on culturally responsive pedagogy, tutoring, and resources.

Academically, it is recommended to:

- Develop teaching methods and lessons that are culturally relevant to Black male students.
- Provide academic supports such as, tutoring specific to the needs of Black male students.

According to Thomas and Warren (2017), pedagogies, such as culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching are critical frameworks for addressing increased diversity and multiculturalism in US schools. In addition, it was recommended that:

- Collaborations with colleagues in education be used as a viable option to help improve academic outcomes for Black male students.

These collaborations should be conducted with staff in the school, as well as educators from neighboring schools and districts with proven success in working with the targeted student population. Collaborations should not be limited to teaching staff, as various staff like counselors, for example, should be recruited to assist with support.

In addition to academic supports, it is recommended that:

- Administration and staff should incorporate social supports for Black male students.
- Collaborations with community partners such as, local Black churches can provide much needed social support and assistance for Black male students. In the findings of their study, Jordan, and Wilson (2017) explained that Black churches often seek to socialize Black students for school success by providing programs specific to increasing their social and emotional development as well as their cognitive skills and abilities.
- The school should consider enlisting social support from mentors. According to Donlan, McDermott, and Zaff (2017), mentoring relationships have been related to several benefits for school youth including greater academic achievement and school engagement, higher graduation rates, and a greater sense of well-being and self-esteem. Furthermore, it has been determined that natural mentoring relationships play a significant positive role in Black adolescents' adjustment and have been associated with higher levels of academic engagement among Black youth (Wittrup et al., 2019).
- The school should recruit and hire Black male teachers. Historical trends in education have shown that, more than any other point, Black students are being educated by teachers with racial or cultural backgrounds different from their own (Green & Martin, 2018). Black men represent only two percent of the nation's K-12 classroom teachers, and there several initiatives in place to recruit and retain Black male

teachers (Bryan & Jett, 2018; Jones, Holton, & Joseph, 2019).

- Policies and practices should be implemented to decrease and reduce the achievement gaps, that provide benefits to youth from underserved racial and ethnic groups. The assignment of students to a teacher of the same race or ethnicity has received a great deal of consideration over the past twenty years (Redding, 2019). Green and Martin (2018) further explained that Black boys that are influenced by Black male teachers have significantly higher test scores, improved discipline, and the presence of Black male adults in educational settings enhances the academic and social development of Black boys. Research has shown that Black men not only provide benefits for students, they contribute as mentors for preservice and new teachers, as colleagues, sponsors and coaches, and researchers and leaders of instruction, and members of the larger school community (Thomas & Warren, 2017).

Project Evaluation

A goals-based evaluation is recommended for educators to determine if the suggested strategies and identified resources needed for collaborations and various supports have been implemented as reflected in the policy recommendations. The evaluation should be divided into short-term goals that can be accomplished within two months, and long-term goals that can be accomplished and evaluated in one to two years

Conclusion

Academic supports like culturally relevant instruction and tutoring, along with social supports such as mentoring, and community collaborations are important strategies that can meet the unique challenges of Black male students. The current policy does not include practices and supports that are designed to address the academic and social needs of Black male students. If implemented, the recommended strategies will provide much needed resources and best practices for staff to provide better instruction and assistance for the success of these students.

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Appendix B: Local School Research Agreement

Local School Research Agreement

October 4, 2018

This communication is in response to David Flowers' request to interview staff from [REDACTED] Christian High School as it pertains to his doctoral dissertation. I am giving David permission to seek volunteers from our staff to assist in his doctoral research. I understand that David may request public documents, such as course syllabi and other classroom materials.

David has my permission to the above requests to conduct his research for his doctoral dissertation. It would be beneficial for us to read his research and conclusion at the completion of his study, if possible.

[REDACTED]

Principal

Appendix C: Former Student Interview Protocol

Former Student Interview Protocol

Topic: The Socialization and Academic Engagement of Black Males in a Christian High School

Time of interview: _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____ Pseudonym: _____

Hello. I am Mr. Flowers. Thank you for participating in this research study. Briefly describe the research: The purpose of this interview is to understand, from your perspective, your experiences while attending Private Christian High School. Your responses will be kept confidential. You do not have to answer any question you wish during this interview.

1. Tell me how you were enrolled in this particular high school.

Probing: Can you provide more details concerning the reasons you attended this particular school?

2. How were you treated by your peers while you were in high school?

Probing: Could you please tell me some more about how you were treated by your peers?

3. Tell me about your interactions with teachers and administrators while at the school.

Probing: Can you provide more details about these interactions?

Probing: Can you give me an example of a specific interaction you've had with an administrator and/or teacher?

4. Tell me about any of your positive experiences in the high school.

Probing: What did you like best about your experiences at the school?

5. Tell me about any of your negative experiences in the high school.

Probing: How did you feel about these experiences?

6. How do you define academic success?

Probing: Could you tell me more about your thinking on academic success?

7. How do you define academic failure?

Probing: Can you provide some examples of academic failure?

8. Tell me about any programs or activities in the school that supported you academically.

Probing: Can you provide more details regarding any specific programs or activities that supported you academically?

Probing: What did you like best about these programs and activities?

9. How did the school practices and policies influence you academically?

Probing: Can you provide specific examples of practices and policies that influenced you academically?

Probing: What are some of your reasons for liking these practices and policies?

10. How do you think the structured social opportunities of the school, like chapel and various clubs, affected you as a student?

Probing: What made you feel that way?

11. If you could make any changes to the school that you believe would have helped you, what would those changes be?

Probing: Can you provide more details concerning these changes?

12. Is there anything else you would like to add that will help me to understand your high school experiences?

Probing: Tell me more

Thank you again for participating in this interview. Your information will be confidential.

Appendix D: Staff Interview Protocol

Staff Interview Protocol

Topic: The Socialization and Academic Engagement of Black Males in a Christian High School

Time of interview: _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____ Pseudonym: _____

Hello. I am Mr. Flowers. Thank you for participating in this research study.

Briefly describe the research: The purpose of this interview is to understand, from your perspective, the experiences of Black male students who attend this high school. Your responses will be kept confidential. You do not have to answer any questions you wish during this interview.

1. What does a Christ-centered education mean to you?

Probing: Could you please tell me more about your thinking on that?

2. How do you define academic success?

Probing: Can you give me an example of academic success?

3. How do you define academic failure?

Probing: Can you give me an example of academic failure?

4. What are some of the programs and practices that exist to support the academic needs of Black male students in the school?

Probing: Can you provide more detail about these programs and practices?

5. What are some of the programs and practices that exist to support the social needs of Black male students in the school?

Probing: What stands out in your mind about these programs and practices?

6. What is your perception of the social climate of the school?

Probing: What makes you feel that way?

7. Describe the relationship you have with the Black male students.

Probing: How do you feel about these relationships?

8. What do you believe are some of the social challenges the Black male students encounter in school?

Probing: Could you provide some examples of these social challenges?

9. How do you believe Black male students are treated by staff at the school?

Probing: What makes you feel that way?

10. How does the school's statement of faith influence the staff's interactions with Black male students?

Probing: Could you tell me more about your thinking on that?

Probing: Could you give me some examples?

11. What do you believe are the biggest academic challenges facing Black male students in the school?

Probing: Could you tell me more about your thinking on that?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the academic or social experiences of Black males at the school?

Probing: Tell me more.

Thank you again for participating in this interview. Your information will be confidential.

Appendix E: Appendix One: Portrait of a Professional Educator Disciples of Christ

Prepared to follow Christ with faithfulness, resilience, and humility in a broken but hopeful world.

- Affirm students, parents, and colleagues as children of God and servants in His kingdom.
- Contribute to the Christian community by sending their children to a Christian school and being an active member of a Christian church.
- Model biblical principles when working with students, parents, and colleagues.
- Encourage and nurture the faith development of the students.
- Share their faith articulately with students, parents, and colleagues.
- Integrate faith and Christian values in instruction and curriculum.
- Motivate students to recognize and use their God-given gifts to work in God's kingdom.
- Live a God-honoring life in keeping with the Basis of [REDACTED] Christian Schools.

CULTURALLY COMPETENT PROFESSIONALS

Prepared to engage with a diverse range of people and ideologies.

- Show awareness that the students in our schools comprise many different backgrounds that encompass our view of diversity. This includes, but is not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability, or attributes, religious or ethical values, national origin, and political beliefs.
- Show awareness and understanding of how these differences are articulated in a school setting with different communication needs, learning styles and behaviors.
- Create a welcoming and inclusive campus and classroom for all students.
- Show respect for and, in turn, expect respect from all students, families, and colleagues on a daily basis.
- Work to create a learning space and experiences that will motivate and engage the abilities of diverse learners.
- Model cultural respect in interactions with students, families, and colleagues.

COMMUNICATORS AND COLLABORATORS

Prepared to work in a team environment, articulate ideas, and consider multiple viewpoints.

- Effectively communicate with colleagues, administrators, and parents in person, in writing, and using various media.
- Communicate effectively students with respect in ways that build and promote growth and maintain appropriate student-teacher relationships.
- Maintain a positive, collaborative, and responsible partnership with parents.
- Handle confrontations and disagreements sensitively and respectfully.
- Support colleagues personally and professionally, consistently following through with collaborative decisions.
- Collaborate with colleagues to implement curriculum that is aligned to standards.
- Treat confidential information sensitively.
- Show respect for and sensitivity to others when using social media.

Appendix F: Sample Self-Assessment Evaluation

Effectiveness Self-Evaluation Tool

Academic and social support strategies for Black male students at Private Christian High School.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

- How has training on culturally relevant pedagogy been provided?
- How have lesson plans been created that are culturally relevant for Black male students?
- In what ways were lesson plans and instruction prepared and incorporated to meet the needs of Black male students?

Academic Tutoring

- How are Black male students tutoring needs identified?

Teacher/Staff Collaborations

- How have collaborative opportunities with other educators within PCHS been implemented?

Black Male Teachers

- How have Black male teachers been incorporated into PCHS?

Collaborations and Community Partnerships

- What community resources have been provided to address the social needs of the Black male students at PCHS?
- How have the community resources and partnerships been utilized to address the social needs of the Black male students at PCHS?

Mentoring

- How have mentoring opportunities for Black male students been incorporated?