

2022

Case Study: Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats Analysis for My Brother's Keeper Organization

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Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Tyriek Bobby Washington

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Abstract

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Keeper Organization

By

Tyriek B. Washington

MS, State University of New York College at Buffalo, 2014

BS, State University of New York College at Buffalo, 2012

Professional Administrative Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Public Administration

Walden University

February 2022

Abstract

In this case study, strategies to increase the impact of mentorship programs and academic success of African American high school students were examined through the use of a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis. The purpose of this case study was to gather empirical data to identify opportunities for First Generation College Bound, Inc., an affiliate of the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative to strategically improve and expand their program. The research question focused on identifying the programs' current administrative practices as well as areas to better engage and support mentees. Using the conceptual framework of Hersey and Blanchard's situational theory of leadership, data were collected through semistructured interviews and focus groups with eight coaches/mentors and three executive staff members who shared their perspectives on program weaknesses and areas of improvement. The data were then coded to derive themes. The results revealed that retention of qualified mentors/coaches was the organization's biggest weakness, whereas the greatest strength was the mentors/coaches' ability to leverage personal backgrounds in a relatable and impactful way. Organizational funding, staff training, and staff placement were three theme areas that needed improvement. The results of this study may assist similar programs that are interested in mitigating weaknesses and identifying areas for improvement. The findings of this study may bring about positive social change by leveraging the SWOT analysis to focus on the researcher's recommendations that organizational leaders can reference to support their vision and achieve program sustainability.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Problem

Academic and leadership development is critical to the development of young men, and this is especially true for young African American men. Assisting youth in gaining the knowledge and skills needed to excel in school and life is best accomplished through added support (My Brother's Keeper Alliance, n.d.). Four key themes found to be critical to the development of youth were the encouragement of personal reflection, building competency skills, fostering thinking, and making them a role model (Bourassa, 2017). Within African American communities in the United States, the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative was established to develop leadership potential, mentorship, and situational and social awareness for African Americans in efforts to close the educational and employment gaps (My Brother's Keeper Alliance, n.d.).

The MBK initiative was launched by The Barack Obama Administration (2016) with the aim to prepare underprivileged youth for college and life experiences. There are individual development programs within the MBK initiative throughout the country that provide mentorship and community activities to youth. These programs were designed to support participating youth in successfully completing high school and gaining admission to a 4-year college or university (Reneau, 2016).

According to the My Brother's Keeper Alliance (n.d.), community leaders and developed mentors enhance the quality of life and dramatically impact the stigmatic norms within underprivileged and troubled communities. Additionally, there are other factors practiced in the MBK initiative that could help teens to obtain success, which included mind mapping, learning from mistakes, and enthusiasm to learn (McMillan &

Reed, 1994). Youth, ranging in ages from 15 to 19, are placed at an advantage when they participate in leadership and mentorship programs (The White House, 2016).

According to the White House (2016), assistance and infrastructural development are usually below average in the areas and societal constructs that were targeted by the MBK initiative. In this study, I focused on building leadership development and organizational structure; thus, the idea of recognizing the benefits of situational and organizational leadership was significant (see Kheng & Peng, 2015). Northouse (2016) stated that situational leadership and transformational leadership complete each other because they both drove positive encouragement with the impactful collaboration.

President Obama's (2016) administration examined the diversity of leadership within African American communities and how this diverse leadership could positively impact African American, male, high school students aged 16 years old and above who aspired to attend college. They found that implementing MBK chapters could positively influence cultural change and structured development for the organization. Influences for students and leadership traits for mentors emerged from various branches, but complete engagement and situational and transformational approaches could improve the quality of life and output of the target population (Daft, 2018).

Problem Statement

First Generation College Bound, Inc. has identified issues within their organization of maintaining leadership and ensuring the best mentors are in place to meet the needs of their students. First Generation College Bound, Inc. faced a lack of proper leadership and mentorship to enhance the academic success and mentorship program for

African American, high school students (see Figure 1). In this professional administrative study, I assisted the organization to improve outcomes by examining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the First Generation College Bound, Inc to ensure they are aligned with their mission. In doing so, I hoped my research would assist the organization, and similar organizations, to identify successful leadership practices to further support students in reaching their college and career goals as well as in closing the educational gap.

There is a gap in current literature related to factors for effective youth mentoring and leadership development programs among the African American community. Reneau (2016) noted that state education systems are geared to help students pass state-sponsored assessments and graduate. However, the First Generation College Bound, Inc. displayed a lack of consistent leadership and mentorship to enhance the academic success and mentorship program for African American, male, high school students.

In this study, I highlighted the impact of resources and the importance of mentorship in improving the academic achievement of African American males while providing best practices to First Generation College Bound, Inc. programs. Improving the program could help improve academic outcomes, better support the youth with their educational aspirations, and enable the organization to be in a better position to pursue a diverse funding stream.

The gap in racial academic achievement has been a social justice issue since the early days of the United States' educational system (CITE). African Americans have been oppressed for decades and due to this systematic oppression, it could be challenging

for them to secure gainful career opportunities even when qualified. The disparity in the academic achievement of European American and African American young men has been present for decades and has influenced the unequal treatment and unbalanced, and sometimes limited, access to opportunities nationwide (CITE).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis with key stakeholders to determine factors that influence academic achievement and effective mentorship practices within the MBK initiative. My intention was by providing a clear understanding of successful organizational practices that the organization receive a roadmap for implementing sustainable improvements. In this study, I provide a better understanding of the following factors: (a) the purpose and scope of an MBK program, (b) the effectiveness of mentorship and leadership development programs designed for African American males, and (c) the development of organizational structure pertaining to leadership and mentoring programs. Understanding the impact of internal and external mentorship relationships between mentees and mentors can help to better provide context to life experiences to determine assistive or corrective action, if needed. These factors also provided a foundation from which to implement effective mentoring programs as well as identify probable disparities between ethnic groups in efforts to resolve the issue (Angelini & Bradley, 2010). One potential area of discovery was to determine how students were handled and how mentors provided guidance. The findings of this study could also assist mentors, counselors, and

coaches in meeting the individual needs of students who are actively involved in the program.

Mentors were directly connected to the direction of academic achievement and leadership development for each student they encountered. Therefore, this qualitative case study included a focus group comprising a selection of program leaders and mentors as well as secondhand records from a local organization that had implemented the MBK initiative. Additionally, I conducted semistructured interviews with organizational leaders in which I asked the same questions as with the focus group. Analysis of these different data points enabled triangulation and allowed me to derive sound and trustworthy conclusions.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I examined the impact of the MBK initiative, primarily through the lens of First Generation College Bound, Inc. facilitators, with a focus on African American high school students ages 14 years old and above. I analyzed the impact of formal leadership engagement and a leader's ability to properly prepare and engage students. Another area of focus was the organizational structure of First Generation College Bound, Inc. as well as the perceived effectiveness of mentorship and development progress on those enrolled at the MBK initiative program. Pairing students with a mentor that could meet the students' needs had been an issue within the program. I conducted this case study analysis from the perspective of mentors and leadership. A SWOT analysis provided a wide range of objective data on the organization and the ability of mentors to deliver needed mentorship to students that organizational leaders

could use to refine their MBK program for optimal outcomes for the young men involved.

I conducted focus groups and semistructured interviews through telephone calls and the Zoom platform with eight individuals that were internally associated with First Generation College Bound, Inc., including directors and mentors. The perspectives of these internal stakeholders aided in building an understanding of the perspective input and output results from MBK initiative mentoring programs as well as the program's impact on its members. Stakeholders who were outside of the program, including program directors, mentors, coaches, and teachers, were also contacted for insight along with taking part in the semistructured interview. This allowed a different perspective from that of leadership and provided additional insight that helped to formulate an adequate SWOT analysis. My goal was to reach data saturation and a thorough data set; therefore, the more mentors interviewed, the more thorough the assessment.

In addition to focus groups and semistructured interviews, I collected and analyzed organizational data including the program's structure, expected outcomes, strategies, program results, funding documents, and any other pertinent documents. This organizational data provided a clear picture of the current status of the MBK program. Additional information was reviewed from the records maintained by the individual programs that took part in the MBK initiative, such as standard operational procedures and regulations. The responses of focus groups were documented, transcribed, coded, and analyzed using NVivo qualitative data analysis software.

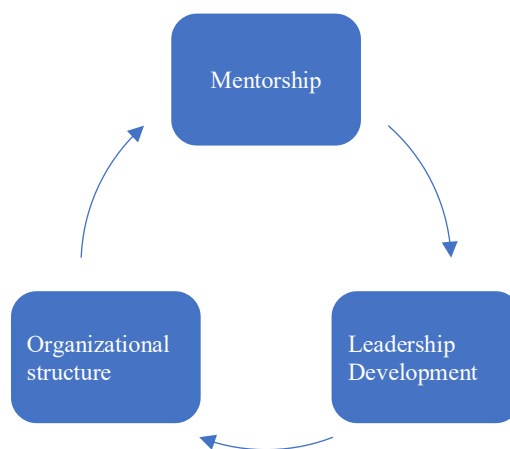
This study relied on the presumption that the outcomes of the MBK initiative leaders and mentors depended heavily on training and mentee relationships. Based on mentorship, leadership development, and mentee interaction, there was a perceived benefit that there was value reflected in the output of the MBK initiative programs. However, there were also threats and weaknesses. With a preliminary view of the surrounding circumstances, such as communication and daily scheduling, I assessed the ability of mentors to consistently meet the needs of mentees.

Research Question

What strategies can a youth mentoring program employ from the national MBK initiative to increase the mentoring effectiveness?

Figure 1

The Mentorship Process



Significance

The organization was provided the objective data and recommendations for improving their mentoring program that directly impacted the lives of young men. In addition, the MBK initiative and the resources that were allocated to the development of

policies surrounding mentorship and funding of such programs can have a significant impact on the African American community and youth. Another possible outcome could be that these efforts and resources could be considered ineffective in positively impacting academic grades and social resources of African American male students. African American communities had sought the implementation of effective mentorship programs to enhance the emotional intelligence of youth and to utilize the MBK platform (My Brother's Keeper Alliance, n.d.).

The African American community depends on teachers and the school administration to develop their youth, as the community entrusts schools with their children for a great portion of their lives. The findings of this research study could help school administrators and teachers to role model the importance of interaction and the value in mentoring relationships (Lee Yang et al., 2011). While mentorship and leadership development are not directly practiced in every school district, there is a possibility to enhance how teachers and administrators engage with students to positively impact academic achievement, ultimately, resulting in greater college enrollment rates (Lee Yang et al., 2011). With the increased collaboration of external organizations and school systems, teachers could be able to practice situational leadership and alter their teaching styles on an individual basis (Hyams-Ssekasi & Caldwell, 2018).

Ultimately, the findings could display a greater balance of mentorship to mentee, in correlation with college acceptance rates, relationships, life perspectives and goals. Further research has the potential to reflect the variation of crime rates and higher graduation rates in the African American community (Blow, 2014). For example, based

on a detailed analysis and a review of the direct relationship to student-athletes and their inability to pass clearinghouse (i.e., the ability for a student athlete to play sports at the college level and retain scholarships under National Collegiate Athletic Association standards), the chances of these African American students to enroll or play at their desired collegiate destination was minimized. Within many African American communities, positive engagement could be reflected in scholarly output that could serve as a direct relationship to mentorship; however, the lack thereof was also reflected within standardized test scores and simple social awareness (Reeves & Halikias, 2017).

Summary

The MBK initiative is a nonprofit organization maintained by a volunteer board and staff. The organization leverages data and makes results-driven decisions to develop programs that focus on ending the achievement gap between European American and African American students. There were limited previous studies that focused on developing effective mentoring and leadership programs for organizations like MBK. However, an in-depth look at First Generation College Bound, Inc.'s position in the current study helped them reorganize and pursue effective strategies for long-term change and close the academic gaps between African Americans and European Americans. An evaluation of data collected displayed the weaknesses, strengths, threats, and opportunities pertaining to the respective mentoring programs. I recorded the findings in outline form for MBK members to consider or apply as they built their mentoring or leadership program.

In the next section of this study, I review the extant literature for the concepts, theories, and ideas relevant to the main problem and the purpose of the study, including the main concepts and types of leadership that could be implemented to improve the mentoring and leadership programs. The main scholars and theorists on leadership development are Reeves (2009), Sparks (2006), Hersey and Blanchard (1997), Ladson-Billings (2012), Fullan (2005), Maynard (2012), and Maxwell (1999). I combined the research and literature of these scholars to gain a basic understanding of concepts and effective strategies to better develop mentorship and leadership programs.

Section 2: Conceptual Approach and Background Introduction

The problem faced by First Generation College Bound, Inc. is the lack of consistent and effective leadership and mentorship to enhance the academic success and mentorship program for African American, male, high school students. The MBK initiative is a mentorship program that counsels underprivileged teenagers on life and advanced educational endeavors (Watson, 2016). Under the MBK initiative, there are individual developmental programs throughout the nation that provide community activities and mentorship programs that are tailored to encourage participating youth in successfully completing high school and enrolling at a university or a 4-year college. There are some improvements required to the mentorship program to ensure the academic success of African American, male students. The guiding research question for this study was:

Research Question: What strategies can a youth mentoring program employ from the national MBK initiative to increase the mentoring effectiveness?

My objective with this study was to conduct a SWOT analysis with key stakeholders to identify aspects that influence the effective mentorship practices and academic success within the MBK initiative. The findings of this research study will help the organization to improve its community activities and mentorship program. I used a nonprobability, purposive sampling strategy to target directors and mentors from First Generation College Bound, Inc. These internal members took part in focus groups, which allowed them to express their ability to accept leadership and their perspectives on student output after mentorship. These perspectives were essential to building an

understanding of the prospective input and output results from MBK initiative mentoring programs and provide an understanding of the program's impact on its members. Five stakeholders who were outside of the organization, including, parents, program directors, mentors, coaches, and teachers from programs that are similar to First Generation College Bound, Inc, also took part in semistructured interviews. I entered and organized the collected data into Microsoft Excel. The data were then sorted into themes, categories, and critical improvement factors to develop a useful perspective from the research participants' responses. I also conducted a document analysis of organizational publications, internal reports, and other relevant files to aid in clarifying the weaknesses, strengths, threats, and opportunities of the MBK initiative.

Concept, Models, and Theories

In this case study, I examined the value of the MBK initiative and its impact on African American youth through identifying leadership structures. Specifically, I identified evidence that displays mentors' interactions with mentees and ability to practice organizational norms to meet the needs of their mentees. Utilizing Hersey and Blanchard's situational theory of leadership (Thompson & Glaso, 2015), the examination was conducted by administering different tests that reflect a direct leadership and mentoring impact on mentees' engagement and retention. Previously considered as the "the life cycle leadership theory," situational leadership was a concept coined by Hersey and Blanchard in the organizational behavior management field (Blanchard, 2018).

In this study, I used a SWOT analysis to evaluate the strategies of the MBK initiative programs as well as how these programs operate using the current structure and processes in place. This analysis allows for a better understanding of the best outcomes for mentors and their impact on mentees. I conducted semistructured interviews and focus groups with respondents from various backgrounds to ensure the collection of different and diverse perspectives and avoid biased findings. According to Phadermrod et al. (2019), there could be biased results in a SWOT analysis if only one portion of the population in a study is involved. Data collected from the SWOT analysis provided the internal weaknesses, threats, and opportunities that can be used to help the organization improve the academic success of the African American men involved in their programming.

Situational Leadership Style

In the situation leadership theory, it is argued that there is not a single ideal leadership style that can work successfully in all situations (Blanchard, 2018). The situational leadership model involves leadership styles that are adaptable to the employees' development behavior: coach (i.e., having the ability to work with mentees and other mentors through formal and informal issues, acting as a resource), support (i.e., being available and attentive to the needs and of mentees when called upon), direct (i.e., having the ability to be transparent and address good and bad situations at all times), and delegate (i.e., using resources when they do not have the answer to ensure that the mentees needs are met) (Thompson & Glaso, 2015). Successful leaders have the

capability to consider situations with various perspectives. They evaluate the behaviors of teams and situations in the play, after which they assess the different ways of leadership to drive the best outcome.

With the group of young, African American men receiving mentorship and support, it is essential that faculty are versatile in their leadership style. Regarding the situational leadership approach, Cairns et al. (1998) argued that an efficient leader must adapt their leadership styles to fulfill the needs and capabilities of their followers from a supportive and directive stance. Varying degrees of support and direction need to be implemented based on the situation. Northouse (2018) mentioned that “to understand what is required in a certain situation, a leader should assess his or her team and evaluate how committed and competent they are to accomplish a certain goal or mentorship” (p. 27). Northouse depicted directive behavior as responses from leadership that aid team members in achieving goals by making targets, giving proper directions and techniques of evaluation, explaining roles, setting time frames, and explaining how the goals are to be accomplished. In applying the situational leadership approach to the MBK initiative and their mentorship programs, faculty need to match their direction level and help to the competence and commitment level pertinent to the goals of young, African American men.

There are various philosophies and theories regarding the importance of situational leadership style for the future. Within the situational leadership model, situational leaders’ diagnostic skills are stressed on identifying how efficient the mentor

is in providing mentorship to the mentees (Northouse, 2018). The mentors work with the mentees to discern where the mentee sits on the development level (Ramsey, 2017).

Situational leadership is usually known as an adaptive style of leadership (Northouse, 2018). This style of leadership helps leaders to charge their team members, monitor the different aspects of their organization, and adapt their leadership to best fit their circumstances and goals. According to Blanchard (as cited in Mwai, 2011), “previously, leaders considered being as boss. In today's world, leaders can no longer lead the team, mainly based on the power gained by position” (p. 15). Situational style leadership is the model used by companies around the globe that need to establish people and work teams; focus on rapport building to land the best output in their teams; and use a consistent leadership style around all of the organizational units, be it national, local, or international (Northouse, 2018).

The Goleman Theory of Situational Leadership

The author of *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman (1995), explained six styles of leadership within the situational leadership arena. One of these six styles is coaching leaders, who promote the personal development of an individual as well as skills related to jobs (Cîrstea & Constantinescu, 2012).

Democratic Leaders

This style of democratic leaders fits best with individuals who know their shortcomings, are adaptable to change, and provide their team a right to vote in various decisions (Northouse, 2018). When employed in various conditions, it develops responsibility and versatility within the team; however, this sort of leadership is kind of

tedious and is not the ideal style in the case of looming deadlines (Cîrstea & Constantinescu, 2012).

Pacesetting Leaders

Pacesetting leaders set quite a high level of expectations for their teams, so this sort of leadership fits well with people who are highly motivated and self-starters (Northouse, 2018). This type of leader works by using example and exemplary ideas (Cîrstea & Constantinescu, 2012).

Affiliative Leaders

Affiliative leaders tend to keep their team members first (Cîrstea & Constantinescu, 2012). In the case of low morale, this sort of leadership works best. This type of leader uses appreciation, helpfulness, and humbleness to develop the confidence of the team; however, this style of leadership may lead to poor performance in the case of team development (Cîrstea & Constantinescu, 2012).

Authoritative Leaders

Authoritative leaders are adept at assessing issues and recognizing shortcomings (Uzonwanne, 2015). This type of leadership is good in a firm that is aimlessly drifting. An authoritative leader will enable and support their team in looking for a strategy to resolve an issue (Uzonwanne, 2015).

Coercive Leadership

Coercive leaders educate their subordinates regarding the actions to be made and tend to have a clear vision of the endgame and know how to achieve it (McKeown & Bates, 2013). This leadership style fits best in critical and disastrous situations, or in

situation in which a community or an organization needs a complete overhaul (McKeown & Bates, 2013).

Blanchard and Hersey's Theory of Situational Leadership

The second model of situational leadership style is based on the work and research of Blanchard and Hersey. Their models were formulated on the basis of two notions: the follower's developmental level and leadership. They build a matrix comprising of four basic styles of leadership:

- Telling = S1 (i.e., making decisions and communicating them to other team members): These leaders work on goals and roles and expect the members to acknowledge these goals and roles. In this type of leadership, communication is only one way. This style works best in critical situations or when continuous outcomes are needed.
- Selling = S2 (i.e., demonstrating and convincing): These leaders may work on objectives and roles for others; however, they are available and quite open to recommendations and different viewpoints. They "sell" their opinions and ideas to gain a sense of cooperation.
- Participating = S3 (i.e., collaborating and facilitating): These leaders tend to give the responsibility of making important decisions to their teams. Though leaders may contribute to decision making, the final decision is left to the members.
- Delegating = S4 (i.e., letting followers work on it): These leaders are all about being accountable for their followers and give minor assistance to workers or

assist in resolving certain issues. They may be requested to assist the team in the process of decision making (Hambleton & Gumpert, 1982).

Education Based Achievement Gap in United States

Promoting the academic achievement of students has been a priority and an important aspect of education. Different institutions have demonstrated progress in this regard using techniques and strategies based on research that are accessible to all educational institutes (Barton, 2004).

Educational institutes have developed reformed acts to make sure that all students fulfill or go beyond the state's standards (Christie, 2002). A gap in academic achievement still exists between African American and European American students; ending this achievement gap is a frontline goal of the educational sector (Christie, 2002). Christie (2002) stated that the gap in the achievement between European American and African American students is a result of the education and resource inconsistencies between the student groups. This has been used to define the conflicting gaps of performance between the Hispanic and African American students at the bottom of the academic performance range. The gap in achievement is also relevant to the same academic inconsistencies between children from low- and high-income homes Christie (2002). The achievement gap has been detected in standardized scores of tests, selection of courses, grades, success statistics, college completion, rates of dropouts, and success reports (Barton, 2004). Bridging this gap has become a main point of educational reform efforts (Christie, 2002).

The difference in the education of a child starts earlier for African Americans. Per recent reports, 30% of European American kindergarten students are predicted to

graduate from college, whereas, 16% of African American kindergarten students are predicted to go to college and graduate with a bachelor's degree (Sparks, 2006).

Children from low socioeconomic environments started kindergarten in lower quality schools than their peers who were economically privileged, strengthening the inequities established even before kids reached the learning age (Lee & Burkam, 2002). The quality of schools was defined in terms of higher achievement of students, more resources of schools, highly qualified instructors, optimistic and positive attitudes of teachers, good school, and neighborhood conditions, and public versus private institutes (Lee & Burkam, 2002).

The United States Department of Education's longitudinal research on childhood was one of the most detailed and extensive research studies to gather data on the basis of the impact of environment on children going to elementary schools. The study's results were obvious- underprivileged African American students remain behind at a very young age before they even reach a formal schooling age. This detail helped in making an initiative to end the achievement gap for low income and African American students (Reeves, 2000). While variables over which the educational sector had no apparent control or command, schools and educational programs were held responsible for expanding the success for all students.

Results from the research were employed to apply the provocative strategies and form learning strategies that provided African American and underprivileged African American students equal learning and career opportunities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

Education-Based Strategies to Close Achievement Gap

Researchers have formed that if the educational sector consider the elements, themes, or standard approaches to make a positive difference, the youth, irrespective of their ethnicities, race, or socioeconomic status, will have equal treatment and opportunities based on their educational field to gain an American dream. Various researchers have studied leadership. Each of the researchers has highlighted the factors that lead to an amazing leader who drives results. Nonetheless, to be a leader, one should have followers—transformational leadership style.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership style has enhanced morale, motivation, and results by making a positive transformation in followers. This particular leadership style mainly focuses on the concern and interests of others, in which the leader provides the best and the ideal interests of the team as a whole. The transformational leadership theory is comprised of the four components of leadership: inspirational motivation, individual and personal attention, intellectual stimulation, and charisma or idealized impact. Overall, every skill is needed for the leaders of any institutes to fulfill the challenges the 20th century has brought. Leadership is considered as the heart and soul of maintaining student achievement and the improvement of a respective institute or program.

Literature, from reliable research, has conveyed that maintaining leadership in a program like MBK must start with a proper system of processes, the greatest level, and goes down to involve each member of the party. Fullan (2005), in his book, leadership & sustainability, coined how to lead educational improvements and enable students in

achieving academic achievement through the art of leadership. Fullan (2005), stressed eight aspects of maintaining sustainability involving a long leadership lever. Leadership and mentorship programs need to encompass all facets of an organization to achieve effective outcomes.

Collaborative Leadership Theory

Reeves (2000), has researched extensively on the improvement of educational and mentoring programs. Reeves, has verified his notion that leadership is the most important factor in achievement and can drive 100/100 results in educational programs. In the text, *The team leader* (2009), an extensive look at factors linked to educational equity, students' achievement, and techniques for advancement is provided (Reeves, 2009).

With a stress on the collaborative leadership, Reeves (2009) highlighted the collaboration, reflection, and strategies required for this sort of leadership. Despite the achievement in some institutions, Reeves highlighted that various district are drastically enhancing their respective program achievements every year (Reeves, 2009). These institutes have 100% reduced fees and lunch and a 100% rate of achieving proficiency on tests of science, social studies, and math. A system based on standardized tests resulting in equal achievement factors is less probable when differences, such as socioeconomic status, environment, curriculum, organization, and parental involvement; are not considered.

Leaders who perfectly specify the achievement gap frequently use data, situated and recognized excellence pockets, and replicate them for more improvement in the

future (Reeves, 2009). Reeves (2003) defined various sorts of leadership models. The most useful and efficient leaders were those who made a collaborative environment with shared leadership, developed goals that are clear, and members of the entire team encouraged improvement of learning, grooming, and teaching. The value of analysis, mission, systematic relations, human interactions, communication, and analytic skills, and important traits of character are essential skills of leadership that are required to be an efficient leader (Reeves, 2009). Moreover, successful leaders focus on the talents, skills, strengths, and knowledge of all the program or organization's executives and improve their own will by making groups that complement their roles. An efficient leader lists the team of people who support each other, leading to a rigid, strong, and influential team (Reeves, 2009).

Maxwell Theory on Effective Leadership

British Field Marshall, Bernard Montgomery (1948), stated "leadership is the ability and will to rally both genders to a common goal and the role which inspires confidence" (p. 3). Maxwell (1999) said, "everything goes down or up on leadership" (p. 16). he stated that an effective leader has the capacities to lead due to the nature of their character and personality. The qualities of a character elevate and empower the abilities of the leadership (Maxwell, 47, 1999).

Maxwell (1999) narrowed down the qualities of effective and great leaders. Effective leaders inspired people from their character, commitment, charisma, competence, and communication. A courageous, focused, and competent individual who can remain concerned and possesses initiative and commitment, grows as a result of

effective leadership. Having the capacity to lead programs or people included being a good listener who has problem-solving skills and has a positive attitude (Maxwell, 1999).

Finally, efficient leaders do not showcase irresponsibility. Instead, they are secure, organized, and contain self-discipline and constantly learn and achieve knowledge by being teachable (Maxwell, 1999). Hence, both leaders and leadership matter. The thinking of a leader, what they do and say and what they become when they are in their workplace, deeply impacts the performance of the organization. The actions and thoughts of the leaders reorganize and modify the organizational culture and shape the pace and direction for the performance of an organization (Sparks, 2005).

The role of the leader is to actualize the potential of a team member while setting organizational power and individual freedom to drive and maximize the data. There are high performing organizations and institutes, that progress only because of strong, high-profile leadership (Bulach et al., 2011). Changing the focus from teaching to acknowledgment is a thing leaders must perform to be efficient leaders of high profile leading and mentorship programs (Bulach et al., 2011). Educational leaders can achieve this task by focusing on gaining knowledge, supporting collaboration, assessing findings, giving assistance, and organizing the instruction, curriculum, and evaluation. All things considered, these five aspects give a convincing system for achieving a maintained and sustained achievement for all students (Bulach et al., 2011).

In various states, the gap is very apparent in the graduation rates of students. There are some examples with gaps as high as 40% to 50% points. In the early months of 2001, 72% of European American students that were registered in the ninth grade

graduated from high school on time; in contrast, only half of Hispanic and African American students, of the same class year, graduated (Greene & Forster, 2003). Another report dictates the rate of dropouts in 2008 as follows: 6.4% African American students, 2.3% European American, and 5.3% Hispanic. By ethnicity and race, statistics reveal the dropout rates of study participants, who ranged in age from 15- 25. With regards to income, an individual in the greater family income quartile is around six-times more likely to have graduated from high school as an individual from the last quartile (Fullan, 2005).

Another data report from the National Education Center (2011) showed a dropout rate of 8.7% among 15-22 years old who dropped out of high school (during 10th, 11th, or 12th grade) in families with low socioeconomic status.

Low income is referred to as families in the lower 20% of all incomes assessed. The results of leaving or dropping out of an educational institute are deep not only to some individuals but to the whole community. Dropouts majorly decrease the chance of getting into a good profession. These substantial social and financial problems majorly impact society overall. The consequences and implications of not getting certifications, posed by the lack of important basic skills to be a constructive individual of a community are comprehensible. When teenagers lack basic talents and skills to spend a productive life, they tend to live as criminals, violent characters, or druggists (Sparks, 2006).

Thus, it is important for every student to be given and to get a proper education for the United States to be prosperous, thrive, and succeed. Education institutes and their programs around America have been encouraged, by the 2001's act of No Child Left

Behind, to display the requirements to a team of students who didn't perform well in academics. The No Child Left Behind Act was initiated by President Bush, who accredited the bill legally on January 8, 2002 (Orlofsky, 2002).

Ron Edmonds's Effective Schools Theory

Edmonds (1979) pinned out the correlates for effective leadership in educational institutes and programs. The correlate gave a system and proper framework for the constant improvement of educational programs. The research of effective schools was highlighted. Research revealed that successful educational institutes focus on a) clear and a long-term mission, b) influential educational leadership, c) an organized and secured environment, d) a high expectation climate, e) usual tracking of student records and progress, f) positive home-school interaction, g) a facility to learn and h) student's ability to complete the task on time eventually enhanced the achievement of students. Understanding all these correlates was fundamentally important to enhance the academic achievement and career-related success of all students.

Operational Terms

Socioeconomic Status: A class or social standing of a person or a community. It is usually weighed as a combination of income, profession, and education. Studies of socioeconomic status often demonstrate inequalities in access to privilege, resources, and control (Maynard, 2012).

Leader: A leader is a person who commands or leads a country, organization, or group. A leader is one who can assess how certain things can be improved and who rallies its followers to put efforts toward a better mission and vision. Leaders can

collaborate, making their goal an absolute reality whole, putting their group first (Maynard, 2012).

Hispanic: The word Hispanic refers to individuals, countries, or cultures relevant to the Spanish culture, people, language, or overall Spain (Orlofsky, 2002).

Relevance to The Organization

Research on ending the achievement gap between African American and European American students is quite limited. No literature was found on the improvement of mentoring and leadership programs of MBK for the young students. However, there has been research focusing on the achievement gap between European American and African American students in high schools (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Various qualitative studies addressing the achievement gap between European American and African American young men in high schools demonstrated that there are more resources, effective leadership programs, and a positive home school relationship that is needed to combat the achievement gaps between European American and African American students. The occurrence of the gap in achievement has puzzled research analysts since the start of the history of American education (Kunjufu, 1989).

Kunjufu (1984) pointed out that a gap in achievements has continually persisted throughout the 21st century and is a major issue to students' progress nationwide. Researchers have revealed the wide history of resources neglect toward African American students leading to a gap in achievement between the European American and African Americans in education (Kozol, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2012). African American students obtained the lesser of the resources and experiences within educational institutes

that are considered to contribute to academic achievement. Administrators have an impact on developing an excellence culture and composing the policies of campus impacting the academic achievement of students (Papa & Fortune, 2002). Leaders in schools concentrate on various distinct impacts of instruction, leading, and management to make a culture of increasing results in a campus (Marzano et al., 2001).

Building a staff, recruiting, and sustaining the skilled and competent staff, and focusing on the excellence culture are examples of the impact of school leaders on the students' academic achievement and successes (Bulris, 2009). While there is rich literature that exists to combat the achievement gap (Jencks & Phillips, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2009), strategies in closing this disparity and even comprehending the strength of the right leadership. The State Education Department collaborated with the My Brother Keeper's organization to award the grants of more than \$6 million. These grants were initiated to support the African American young men in terms of academic achievement, career, or readiness while building beneficial relationships with families to lead the achievement and success of all students. Meaningful family engagement has been established when the connection of respect and trust is developed between community, school, and home New York State Education Department, 2020).

The MBK grants were said to help both staff and students to develop collaborative learning environments that address the disparities in educational success and opportunities between the young African American males and their counterparts. My Brother's Keeper concludes that achievement gaps are the outcome of the opportunities that are accessible to many non-African American students but not to African Americans

(New York State Education Department, 2020). Moreover, the organization focuses on fostering real transformation and gives all students opportunities to close the gap. Hence, the MBK organization focused on raising funds and developing relationships that can foster the career and persistent academic achievement of African Americans within the MBK (The White House, 2016).

Organization Background and Context

President Obama introduced the MBK initiative in February 2014. The main goal of MBK is to ensure that all young populations have an approach and formalized way to grow and develop professionally on the No Child Left Behind legislation (My Brother's Keeper Alliance, n.d). The policies were set to give opportunities and transformation within underserved societies (My Brother's Keeper Alliance, n.d). As per the White House (2016) My Brother's Keeper Progress Report of 2016, the Obama administration developed strategies for more than 250 colonies, around more than fifty states, to initiate a difference and apply transformational leadership within the communities that have been selected (The White House, 2016). Federal policy gave \$6 million in grants to provide facilities for youth success (The White House, 2016).

According to the My Brother's Keeper Alliance (n.d), collaboration, community leaders, and developed mentoring will enhance the quality of life and dramatically impact the stigmatic norms within the underprivileged and troubled communities. Additionally, there are other factors that could help teens to obtain success, which includes mind mapping, learning from mistakes, and enthusiasm to learn (McMillan & Reed, 1994).

Youth within the age ranges of 15 to 19 have access to leadership and mentorship opportunities as a result of the grant funds (The White House, 2016).

According to the White House (2016), assets and infrastructural development are usually under average in the targeted areas and societies of MBK. This study focuses on building leadership development and organizational structure; thus, the idea of recognizing the benefits of situational, transformational, and organizational leadership is significant (Kheng & Peng, 2015). Northouse (2016) stated that situational leadership and transformational leadership complete each other as they both drive positive encouragement with the impactful collaboration.

The current White House study examines the diversity of leadership within African American communities and their ability to apply such diversity into African American high school students, ages 16 and above, who aspire to attend college. Implementing MBK chapters could positively influence cultural change and structured development for the organization to share practices. Influences for student and leadership traits for mentors emerge from various branches; but complete engagement and situational and transformational approaches can improve the quality of life and output (Daft, 2018).

Role of the Doctor of Public Administration Student/Researcher

My role with the MBK organization is voluntary. As a volunteer, I conducted general duties such as collecting funds and helping African Americans in the organization build healthy relationships with their families. My collaboration with the MBK organization is collaborative only and is not based on monthly payment. My goal is to

serve the organization while working on my project to get an in-depth knowledge of the entire program and how it works. I attend the virtual meetings of MBK to keep myself updated about the organization and what initiatives are being taken to improve the program, which has proven to be helpful in conducting this research.

My role in the study project is to conduct a SWOT analysis within the organization and answer the questions the research has posed. I collaborated with participants associated with the institute to get the most out of the topic. I conducted semistructured interviews of the different roles of the MBK leaders and students to understand the strengths and weaknesses of and get an understanding of the initiative that is required to improve the mentoring program of MBK. By conducting the SWOT analysis, I got more knowledge and ideas about how it has been working. The evidence from the SWOT analysis helped me to investigate the overall organization to look for the areas where improvement is needed to close the achievement gap between African American and European American youth.

My basic motivation to conduct this research on MBK is to learn and get an in-depth idea of how to develop effective leadership and mentoring program that can help organizations like MBK and bring a social change. By conducting this research, I can assist the MBK organization in building an effective leadership program that can help them with their mission and vision.

MBK initiative is intriguing, as I believe in giving equal education to everyone irrespective of their ethnicities and races. The organization is addressing a real-world issue in in the United States and conducting the analysis with the goal of helping the

organization is worth it. The potential bias may be the cultural relevance and the direction of conversation towards the study's main purpose. The data has been collected using semistructured interviews while talking to the participants in full confidence of their privacy and the ethical guidelines by Walden University.

I developed the questionnaire to direct the semistructured interview conversation towards the main goal of the study to prevent potential biases, as well. This study's research question and the related SWOT analysis has been approved by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (08-20-21-0747380) and my committee. The semistructured interviews were then recorded in a digital device to keep a record. In addition, the semistructured interviews were also recorded in Microsoft word in tabulated form.

Summary

The MBK initiative is a building non-profit firm and maintained by the volunteer board and the staff in need of results-driven decisions to end the achievement gap between European American and African American students. There is very little research on developing effective mentoring and leadership programs for organizations like MBK. The staff and volunteer teams of MBK offer a service to a range of the population in America with no restricted criteria. The MBK organization collaborated with the State Education Department to build fundraising that will help young African American men build their academic success and careers.

The organization has worked hard to bring a positive change. However, a critical investigation of their current position will help them reorganize and start effective

strategies for the long-term change and close in the academic gaps of American youth.

An evaluation of data collected displayed the weaknesses, strengths, threats, and opportunities pertaining to the respective mentoring programs. Findings are recorded in an outline form for MBK members to consider or apply as they build their mentoring and leadership program focused on ending the academic achievement gaps between European American and African American youth.

Section 3: Data Collection Process and Analysis

The problem faced by First Generation College Bound, Inc. and similar MBK programs is the lack of proper leadership and mentorship to enhance the academic success and mentorship program for African American, male, high school students. First Generation College Bound, Inc. is a leadership development and mentoring program that heavily depends on its mentors to deliver a service that drives each student's ability to be successful in both their educational and life pursuits. Premised on the program's existing mission, vision, and objectives that were developed through facilitated strategic meetings, First Generation College Bound, Inc. stakeholders are prepared to take the next strategic planning steps to determine long-term goals, funding, and program outlooks in efforts to provide heightened mentorship and leadership development for their mentees.

Background

First Generation College Bound, Inc., is an organization that focuses on promoting the growth and advancement of males of color that are often impacted by lack of opportunities and negative aspects of at-risk communities. The program is supported by the MBK initiative, launched by President Obama in 2014, that promotes a goal of inspiring, building, and nurturing young men of color to feel valued and encourage them to successfully pursue any opportunities for advancement (CITE). The originating MBK initiative that was launched in 2014 evolved into an expanded network referred to as the MBK Alliance in 2015. The MBK Alliance focuses on building a network of mentorship programs and providing community support for men of color on a large scale. The MBK Alliance was adopted as an Obama Foundation initiative in 2017 (CITE).

Mentors, stakeholders, and advocates for First Generation College Bound, Inc. and other MBK Alliance-related programs are volunteers that come from varying backgrounds. They share a commonality in their passion to be a part of the solution to mitigate the social inequities that young men of color encounter. The adjusted cohort graduation rate, which denotes specific rates of achievement based on demographics, identified that only 79% of African American students graduated from high school during the 2017–2018 school year (The Condition of Education, 2020). Additionally, a few of the disparities that impact children in the African American community are that 55% of African American children live in mother-only households, which is the highest rate when compared to other ethnic groups, and 32% live in poverty (Institute of Education Sciences, 2020). The National Dropout Prevention Center noted that the four domains of individual, family, community, and school are all potential risk factors that impact whether an individual will graduate from high school (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2016).

A closer examination reveals that even when African American, male students enroll in a 4-year degree program, they are more likely to dropout than other ethnicities/genders (CITE). The need for high-functioning mentorship programs like First Generation College Bound, Inc. is critical in helping to bridge these gaps. The mission, vision, and goals of the program need to be supported by repeatable processes that result in success for young, African American men. The stakeholders and mentors of First Generation College Bound, Inc. are not merely volunteering time to impact a few students in the present. If adequate and effective mentoring processes are in place, the

impacts of these mentoring efforts will have long-term, positive impacts on the future of the African American community as a whole. Research has noted that proper mentorship can help improve educational and graduation disparities amongst African American males as compared to other groups (Chappell et al., 2015).

In this study, I conducted semistructured interviews with stakeholders, mentors, and those associated with First Generation College Bound, Inc. to uncover obstacles, weaknesses, and threats to the program. The results of this study allow for corrective action planning and recommendations to be made to enhance the current mentoring approaches that are being used by the program. To ensure consistency in how this research was conducted and conveyed, I utilized the Walden University Institutional Review Board guide (Endicott, 2019) to support the proper preparation and reporting of this study.

Practice-Focused Questions

Organizational Problem

The problem faced by First Generation College Bound, Inc. and similar MBK programs is the ability to build a mentorship program that consistently improves educational and resource gaps that impact African American. The program leverages a transparent organizational approach that incorporates stakeholder input from MBK leadership, parents, mentors, and students. This inclusive approach helps to ensure that decisions on mentorship and educational opportunities are considered from multiple perspectives. Even though focused strategic meetings have resulted in an established mission, vision, and short-term goals, structured processes that promote repeatable

success have not been clearly defined. This overarching organizational problem is impacting the ability of the mentors to fully equip their mentees for their next stages of life. Additionally, metrics and key performance indicators are needed to monitor progress and support goals of reaching repeatable success through established processes. These factors will aid First Generation College Bound, Inc. in expanding and solidifying further development efforts to support its students.

The mentees in this study are all African American students that are around the same age; however, they come from diverse families and a variety of backgrounds. Through mentorship and leadership development they identify and pursue personal goals, receive guidance, and seek opportunities and a foundation to further their access to a college education. The mentors hold a great responsibility in conducting in-depth analyses of the needs, learning habits, and overall goals of the mentees. To meet their goals, First Generation College Bound, Inc. must meet their target population's needs without conforming to any form of bureaucracy or other practices that will negatively impact their success of the program. First Generation College Bound, Inc. members understand the imperative need for establishing defined processes, improving performance metrics and key performance indicators, and enhancing the organizational infrastructure that is needed to sustain the program and meet the qualitative needs of those they serve.

Gap in Knowledge

The intent of First Generation College Bound, Inc. is to assist in mitigating the educational and resource gaps that impact African American and African American

students. The specific impacted population that I focused on in this case study was African American, male, student athletes. Although the program mentors come from diverse backgrounds and have a variety of educational and professional experiences, not all are licensed coaches and counselors. There is a need for defined, repeatable processes that can be leveraged by all mentors, regardless of background. This would aid in achieving the common goal of providing a quality service through mentorship and collaborative input.

Mentees seek mentorship to assist them with obtaining scholarships, enhancing their grades, and improving their social skills to further their overall success. Currently, there is equal input in regard to how to improve the program from both students and mentors. In efforts to reduce any monotony from this dynamic, external parties play an important role and have great influence in the direction of the program and its ability to seek qualified members and mentors to meet the mission and vision of the program. To promote collaborative efforts and get the maximum participation from both the mentees and the staff, standard operating processes must be developed and followed with collective knowledge to meet program needs. Community input and collaboration both have a robust impact on the ability to connect directly with the mentees. This input and collaboration could also positively impact the scores of mentees on standardized tests; however, it is difficult for the program to measure its impact on the mentees outside of their improvement on standardized tests.

Practice-Focused Questions

The Walden University Research Center (2019) noted that data from a variety of sources provides greater validity, insight, and thorough support for a case study.

Leveraging journals, professional leadership books, and research content from academia, I employed a cohesive approach to conducting this case study and gap analysis of an organization. According to Barry (1997) and Bryson (2004), there are different layers to the strategic planning and evaluation process. Following the steps in each of these layers, First Generation College Bound, Inc. has the ability to expand and implement guidelines to reach their mentees while also catering to its stakeholders.

In order to obtain a holistic assessment of First Generation College Bound, Inc., I conducted a SWOT analysis. Data were collected through a focus group and semistructured interviews of participants. Questions for the semistructured interviews were the same asked in the focus group. I decided to use this approach based on the insights provided by Barry (1997) and Bryson (2004) who described optimal collection methods and best practices for a robust review. Collective methods to influence and implement new strategies are optimal when they are developed from a collaborative input of individuals (Barry, 1997). The use of focus groups and semistructured interviews provided the best opportunity for stakeholders to contribute and provide input on the experiences and concerns of mentors.

Prior to the start of the focus group meeting, I provided a basic overview of this case study and discussed the focus group expectations with the participants. The major factors involved in conducting successful focus groups are to establish ethical guidelines;

define the purpose, scope and timeline; and facilitate collaborative and insightful discussions for information collection (CITE). I assessed the focus group discussions and any relevant feedback to develop a plan of action (see Cuyjet, 2006; Harris, 1999; Wright & McCreary, 1997). Simon (1999) also listed similar steps to executing a successful focus group, with an emphasis on translating results into action.

The purpose of the focus group was to gather data from participants and stakeholders in order to build a holistic view of the strengths and weaknesses of First Generation College Bound, Inc. The results from this case study may also have a direct correspondence to other MBK-related initiatives and the challenges that they may similarly face. It was essential to identify these challenges because they ultimately impact the student participants. The focus group was made up of First Generation College Bound, Inc. mentors, educators, and staff members. The focus group meeting was conducted within 1 hour and was guided towards collecting the participants' perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and corrective actions that are needed by the organization. The overarching focus group questions were:

1. What does First Generation College Bound, Inc. do well?
2. What does First Generation College Bound, Inc. need to do better to influence students?
3. What standard processes should mentors be using to help mentees consistently improve and achieve success?

Semistructured interviews with participants consisted of the following questions:

1. What opportunities can the mentors associated with First Generation College Bound, Inc. leverage or take advantage of?
2. What threats, weaknesses, or challenges does First Generation College Bound, Inc. and its mentors face in meeting the educational and resource needs of its student participants?

Each semistructured interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. I used coding to protect each participant's identity and confidentiality and participant responses were digitally recorded. When stored, all data were password protected for security purposes. A Microsoft Power Business Intelligence (BI) desktop was used for data insight and analysis.

The purpose of the SWOT analysis was to provide an overview of the organization's strengths and weaknesses, emphasizing the opportunities for the mentor's influence and organizational planning. Bryson (2004) referred to the SWOT analysis as a process of thorough understanding and the missing factor to innovation. Through a thorough assessment of all factors surrounding an organization, areas of improvement and challenges can be identified and opportunities that need cultivating can be highlighted. Using this information, calculated transitions and proactive change measures can be developed to positively impact an organizational structure (Bryson, 2004).

Purpose

The purpose of this case study was to gather empirical data to identify opportunities for First Generation College Bound, Inc. to strategically improve and expand their program while assessing if their current mentorship approach is conducive

toward promoting their vision. I gathered data through individual semistructured interviews, a focus group, and preexisting scholarly research. In the conclusion of this study, I provide a living document with recommended processes and improvement insights pertaining to First Generation College Bound, Inc. and similar MBK programs. This living document can be referenced as new strategies are implemented, enhanced training for mentors is created, and strategic plans are developed to promote a more uniform and success-driven experience for mentors, mentees, and stakeholders.

How this Approach Aligns with the Question

The primary question posed in this study was: What strategies can one MBK program employ to increase the mentoring effectiveness for African American, male, high school students? I gathered data from participants through semistructured interviews and a focus group. I used insights from Berry (1997), Bryson (2004), and Harris (1999) in the strategic planning process and decision to use a SWOT analysis for this study. According to the information found in these sources, First Generation College Bound, Inc. has taken the initial steps in meeting their expected vision, short- and long-term goals, and evaluation of the services they provide through mentor assessments. Furthermore, the identified sources support First Generation College Bound, Inc.'s efforts to expand their scope and strategic planning processes that focus on identifying a methodology to evaluate the impact of the mentorship program, reinforce implemented changes, and support innovative ideas for outreach for African American student athletes. With proper evaluation and the adoption of necessary improvements by leadership and

mentors, First Generation College Bound, Inc. is prepared to grow their infrastructure and influence the African American students they mentor.

First Generation College Bound, Inc.'s leadership is addressing the evaluation and output of their mentors, and per Harris (1999), is in the process of implementation. Harris refers to the implementation stage as the point where an organization begins to shift as a result of error or changes that are needed in output. When there is necessary action that supports the fulfillment of goals, corrective action that can keep an organization current can occur (Harris, 1999).

Key Aspects of the Administrative Project

This case study leveraged a SWOT analysis that used a focus group and semistructured interviews in order to gather detailed information in support of First Generation College Bound, Inc. and MBK initiative. The results of this case study will assist First Generation College Bound, Inc. leadership with identifying strategies for improvement that will enable them to implement an action plan and incorporate sustainable measures to improve their organization. A focus group composed of mentors, teachers, educators, and parents was integral in identifying vulnerabilities and organizational opportunities. Semistructured interviews with stakeholders that volunteer with the organization provided a holistic view of any gaps and critical areas of concern and assisted First Generation College Bound, Inc. and other MBK programs in addressing those areas, thus creating opportunities for correction.

Sources of Evidence

Sources

Empirical data were gathered from the focus group and semistructured interviews. The process of selecting the participants was scaled with consideration to ensure validity of this study. First Generation College Bound, Inc. members and staff are considered internal participants who have access to mentees, processes, budget, planning, goals, mandates, and the internal process of First Generation College Bound, Inc.

The participants come from diverse backgrounds, to include differing: professional standings, genders, ages, religions, and education. First Generation College Bound, Inc. is a non-for-profit organization whose intent is to influence and mentor African American students, enabling them to excel past their educational goals and obtain college admission. The MBK initiative serves as an overarching reference for individual African American mentorship programs that focus on helping students to develop their life skills and expand their educational opportunities. The MBK initiative also acts as a founding source for programs similar to the First Generation College Bound, Inc. Leveraging a wealth of experience, all of the participants are of age and are able to contribute to the trajectory of First Generation College Bound, Inc., and the community they serve.

Relationship to Purpose

The relationship surrounding each source and the purpose of this study assisted with capturing the ability for First Generation College Bound, Inc. to scale and understand its current infrastructure in relation to its mentors and mentees. The sources

also assisted with developing a corrective action plan for the organization to follow. My involvement with the First Generation College Bound, Inc., is as a consultant, assisting them with understanding their SWOT. I am not an employee of First Generation College Bound, Inc. My intent is to assist the organization with clarifying their goals, maximizing their vision, and creating a process that will be beneficial to the staff, mentors, and mentees. I have been involved with First Generation College Bound, Inc. leadership since May 2017.

How Collection Provides an Appropriate Way to Address the Question

In order to address the overarching research question, conducting a case study that is identified as a SWOT analysis provides the most efficient method of developing relationships, while gathering data from active participants to address the problem. The SWOT analysis provides an opportunity for participants to address concerns and develop methods for corrective action. The data collected provides internal and external views, which enables the organization to address concerns without bias intentions.

In order to understand the impact and need for change of First Generation College Bound, Inc., the organizational structure, and the programs overall impact, a direct relationship needs to be built and applied to collect information. The SWOT is a window for interaction and ideas, which also exposes some of the program's flaws. Focus groups allow for those with a direct relationship to the program and those outside of the program to build a solution and identify risks. All data collection serves as a contribution to the programs overall view.

How Analysis Provides the Appropriate Way to Address Questions

The participants' diversity and knowledge of the mentorship and development community provides a robust outline of the organization. The SWOT analysis highlights factors that need to be addressed through the program and on an individual standpoint for the mentors, and provides context to recommendations and the immediate steps for corrective action. Harris (1999) stated that a SWOT analysis with a mixed audience can provide the most validity to an organization and its stakeholders.

Databases utilized to obtain the previous studies mentioned include Google Scholar, Walden University database, and general discussions that provided documents as recourses. The regulations pertaining to this study were obtained through researching government websites.

Peer reviewed articles obtained through the Walden University database and Google scholar were used to address the practice problem. Through these prior studies and peer-reviewed articles, additional sources were found. Mentorship concerning teens in the African American community seems to be a missed topic with no actual plan of action. I have studied African American wellness and entrepreneurship for over 10 years and have contributed three years to this study. Different forms of leadership theories and metrics were reviewed, as well as how these forms of leadership influence African Americans students to meet their goals and ultimately reach higher levels of success. According to Barry (1997), to reach the youth in African American communities you have to relate to them and gain their trust, being mindful of past experiences and current political climates. Barry stated that influence and input within the African American

community enables output and development, specifically addressing African American teams and the organizations that serve as outreach.

The participants come from diverse backgrounds, professional standings, career, gender, age, religion, and education levels. The participants' diversity and knowledge of the mentorship and development community provides a robust outline of the organization. The focus group provided an opportunity for internal and external leaders to discuss solutions and develop relationships for expansion and operations. Individual semistructured interviews with these selected participants, both internal and external, provided a direct approach for solutions and the focus of mentorship and organizational direction. Ultimately, assisting First Generation College Bound, Inc. with their goal, vision, and direction.

Operational Data

There have been individual initiatives to ignite leadership in the African American community throughout the 20th century; however, the MBK initiative provided an overarching plan with the input of government resources, research, and community leaders. The MBK initiative has been supported by government leaders and provided guidance for at-risk areas where development and mentor services are needed. Barry (1997) stated the need for situational awareness and situational leadership is vital in the aspect of mentoring and servicing the African American community. Lastly, when the at-risk areas are addressed, it is necessary to have a strategic approach that focus on: understanding how to identify a need, service the need, and make a strategic plan to

address all goals. In order to uphold principles and standards within these organizations, proper methodology implementation is needed.

First Generation College Bound, Inc. is composed of educators, leaders, mentors, and professionals who collectively meet the needs of their mentees. Their objective is to make an impact on mentees, while developing them for future endeavors. The data collected for First Generation College Bound, Inc.'s background, purpose, mission, and vision were collected initially through facilitated meetings. Direct communication with one point of contact was conducted and the point of contact acted as the facilitator. The facilitator was an internal leader of the organization who was able to provide internal data along with their goals. During the initial contact with First Generation College Bound, Inc. leadership, permissions, access to staff, and documents were requested. During the initial stages of the study a letter was generated to agree upon the terms of communication and the use of documentation (Appendix A).

While conducting this study, focus group participants interacted with each other via Zoom, all members had an opportunity to see answers and make suggestions. Participant answers were pinned on the screen for others to see. Participants used coded names to guard their identify. The information for participants that volunteered for semistructured interviews was safeguarded and made confidential. I am the only person who is able to identify the participants and their answers. Microsoft Power BI Desktop was used to code participants.

Participants

There are 10 participants that participated in the study. According to Walden University (2019), when conducting a study, having a diverse group of participants brings value and validity to a topic. The focus group participants were comprised of the founder of First Generation College Bound, Inc, a mentor, and the director. External members included coaches, MBK leaders, a parent, external mentors, and counselor.

Semistructured Interviews

The participants that agree to be a part of the semistructured interviews are over the age of 18 and are comprised of internal and external members of the organization. Two of the participants are internal staff of First Generation College Bound, Inc. There are four other participants, two of the participants are directors of the MBK initiative, the final two participants are both teachers, mentors, and parents. All participants were invited to participate with no expectation that they would agree to join the semistructured interview.

Participant Selection

The participants that were selected for the study are those who are able to provide insights to the MBK initiative process and specifically have interest in insuring success in First Generation College Bound, Inc. The internal members provide value to the study due to their internal knowledge and interaction with mentees. The external participants selections were based on a participant's ability to provide insight to the study and understand the impact of leadership while mentoring African American students. The internal and external participants within the focus group are able to provide validity to the

subject while providing diverse perspectives. The semistructured interview participants are all professional adults who have provided consent to the study and also provide knowledge through their experience.

The participants play a key role in the success and longevity of First Generation College Bound, Inc. The participants understand the value in mentor relationships, organizational leadership and development, and the operational process. In totality, the participants worked collectively to develop strategies, solutions, and opportunities for First Generation College Bound, Inc.

Procedures

Walden University's criteria for a Professional Administrative Study (PAS) includes review and oversight by committee members, a review and analysis of peer reviewed studies and other scholarly literature. These levels of inquiry were conducted for this study. The SWOT analysis was chosen as the best method to identify the problem focus, while assisting with developing First Generation College Bound, Inc.'s strategic planning process and assessing their ability for mentees to develop quality relationships with mentees.

Study Validity

Cuyjet, (2006); Harris, (1999); Wright and McCreary (1997), Harris (1999), and Bryson (2004) agreed that the diverse influence provides guidance to an organization, thus, contributing to their overall performance and organizational relationship with stakeholders. The focus group and semistructured interviews followed the guidelines of Cuyjet, (2006); Harris, (1999); Wright and McCreary, (1997) and Barry (1997). The

focus group provided an opportunity for all the participants to collaborate. Their answers were transparent and allowed them to discuss differences and similarities. The semistructured interviews provided a chance for participants to provide in-depth responses in which the data was in direct relationship to First Generation College Bound, Inc. Participants' responses and identity were safeguarded through Microsoft Power BI desktop. The final results of this study provide an executive overview on the findings and recommendations. The focus groups lasted for 2 hours and averaged approximately 30 minutes per topic. Also, the semistructured interviews lasted for 30 minutes and eight internal and external stakeholders were interviewed.

Initial conversations with First Generation College Bound, Inc. leadership were conducted to establish the initial study and to determine First Generation College Bound, Inc.'s ability to increase the mentoring effectiveness for African American youth. The purpose of the study, the process for gathering and distributing data, findings and recommendations were presented in a presentation to the program's leadership. The program's leadership is expecting a final approved study with a completed action plan to follow, which can improve their process and relationships.

Data Protection

The Walden University IRB practices for assuring participants protection was utilized in safeguarding the identify, responses, and data throughout this study. Individual data were gathered from participants, obtained through a focus group, and semistructured interviews. To capture the data of the focus groups, a screenshot of data was taken, typed and saved in the Microsoft Power BI Desktop. Semistructured

interviews were recorded via Zoom and documented through saved passwords through Microsoft Power BI Desktop. All data and information were secured with passwords through Microsoft Power BI Desktop and coded to ensure the security of participants. Data will be retained and protected for 5 years.

Incentives

There are no formal incentives for the participants due to the pandemic; however, at the end of the focus group I plan to provide the participants with digital appreciation cards. These digital cards can be directly sent to their emails and opened as physical cards.

Consent Process

Upon IRB approval and the permission to proceed with the study, a detailed explanation of the data collection process was presented to the Board. Inclusive of this presentation, was the consent form, indicative of prospective interview dates, a voluntary participation and termination clause and an overview of the confidentiality agreement.

Focus-Group Consent Process

The focus group had a projected scheduled start date, ranging three to four weeks after the presentation to the Board. The focus group was conducted in a single session, lasting a period of 2 hours, covering topics in 30 minute increments. Group participants were provided with consent forms prior to the group session, reiterating the shared expectations of the group, voluntary participation and termination and confidentiality, initially, presented to both the IRB and First Generation College Bound, Inc. All consent forms and agreements were collected at the start of the session (See Appendix B).

Semistructured Interviews Consent Process

The semistructured interviews had a projected scheduled start date, ranging 4 to 5 weeks after the presentation to the Board and 1 week following the closing of the focus group. The semistructured interviews were conducted over a period of 2 weeks, with an allotted time slot of 30 minutes for each of eight participants. Each individual participant was provided a consent form unique to the semistructured interview process at the start of the semistructured interview session. This consent reiterated the: shared expectations of the group, voluntary participation and termination, and confidentiality presented to both the IRB and MBK's First Generation College Bound, Inc. All consent forms and agreements were collected at the start of the session (See Appendix C).

Safeguarding of Privacy

The measures to safeguard privacy of the participants of this study, during the focus group differed from that of the semistructured interviews. Although through each method of data collection, participants signed consent forms, respective to confidentiality and expectations, the modes of safeguarding virtual correspondence contrasted. Both processes were held virtually via Zoom platform and recorded. Transcription of the recordings were completed the following week and used for coding purposes. The coding software used was Microsoft Power BI desktop.

Focus Group Privacy

The focus group was held via Zoom at 7 p.m., to ensure all participants were punctual and active during the session. All participants were asked to wear headphones and remain in a secluded room throughout the entirety of the session. Cameras remained

off, and participants utilized alias screen names, assigned to them prior to the session. I was the only person with access to a list of the screen names and corresponding actual names of the participants, as the group's facilitator. Group participants were made aware of when the recording of the session started. Participants used the "raise hand" feature, when they had a statement or question not prompted by a group round question. The chat feature was disabled during the recorded session. Confidentiality was reiterated.

Semistructured Interview Privacy

The semistructured interviews were held via Zoom at approximately 7 p.m. to maintain a sense of consistency following the focus group session and ensure all participants are punctual and active during the session. The interview was conducted as an individual semistructured interview and the participant were expected to utilize a secluded room for the duration of the interview session. The use of headphones were used at the participant's discretion. The camera remained on during the entirety of the semistructured interview process and the participant utilized an alias screen name, differing from that of the focus group, assigned to them prior to the session. I was the only person with access to a list of the screen names and corresponding actual names of the participants as the interviewer. The interviewees were made aware of when the recording of the session started. The chat feature was disabled during the recorded session. Confidentiality was reiterated.

Data from the focus group and semistructured interviews was recorded and safeguarded though Microsoft Power BI desktop. Participants were coded as the

following: Male 1, Male 2, Female 1, Female 2, Nonbinary 1, Nonbinary 2 and so forth.

All information pertaining to responses was safeguarded with passwords.

Measures to Permit Participants to Withdraw Participation

Participants who choose to withdraw have the ability to do so through verbal and written forms. To conduct a holistic study, the intent was to retain participants. However, if the occasion occurred, they were able to excuse themselves at any time from the study without negative impact. The study continued as documented and a withdraw would have been documented and stored for retention purposes. There were no withdrawals, though.

Briefly Discuss Organization's Approval of the Study Project

First Generation College Bound, Inc. initially approved this study via signed agreement (Appendix A). All approval guidelines followed the Walden Institutional Review Board process. My Committee, the IRB, and First Generation College Bound, Inc. consented to the approval of this study.

Analysis and Synthesis

Participants selected for the focus group included internal members of First Generation College Bound, Inc. The group of individuals are diverse in terms of education, background, and gender. To bring the participants together safely, a Zoom conference was conducted to ensure best practices and direct communication for this study. I served as the facilitator of the focus group to ensure directions were followed and there is respect within the group. At the end of the meeting, there was a brainstorming session which allowed creative influence to assist with the programs output.

Semistructured Interviews

Participants selected for the semistructured interviews are internal and external members of the organization. The participants focused on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and also had the opportunity to provide recommendations during the semistructured interview process. Zoom was used to record the semistructured interview process and all data obtained through the semistructured interview was safeguarded with a password via Microsoft Power Bi Desktop.

Semistructured Interviews Assuring Integrity of Evidence

The following was conducted to ensure the integrity and evidence is present:

- Initial steps to the study granted consent from the First Generation College Bound, Inc., and my committee. The semistructured interview ensured integrity without bias of questions, consistency of communication, and transparency among participants and committee members.
- A formal invitation was sent to the participants via email. These emails were sent individually to ensure there was not a breach of identity.
- A formal invitation was also sent to the committee members to be observers to the semistructured interviews.
- All participants and committee members received an agenda detailing event plans.
- Detailed instructions were provided to all participants. This included Zoom links for the individual rooms, time, and topics. At the close of

each semistructured interview, all participants had an opportunity to speak about their overall outlook of the organization.

Integrity of Evidence

Initial consent was granted from the First Generation College Bound, Inc., and my doctoral committee. The focus group ensured integrity without bias of questions, consistency of communication, and transparency among participants and committee members.

The researcher listened with the intent to understand all answers and responses. All answers and responses were recorded via Zoom and written. Once the focus group and semistructured interviews were completed, the participants were thanked, and the Zoom meeting was concluded. All data were secured through Microsoft Power BI Desktop. The data was analyzed and coded where only the researcher has the ability to identify the participants. The data was used to assist First Generation College Bound, Inc. with their ability to address concerns and build strategic guidelines to scale their performance and relationships.

Summary

The data collection followed the guidelines and policies sustained by Walden University's IRB to assist with identifying the best methods and practices. First Generation College Bound, Inc. can utilize the research data to ensure best practices and sustainable relationships. The focus group provided an opportunity for the researcher to engage with participants who are knowledgeable in that field, while also allowing participants to collectively develop an outline which the organization can follow. The

semistructured interviews provided the ability for direct communication and expansion on the opportunities and threats to the organization. All data were recorded and safeguarded through Microsoft Power BI desktop. The final deliverable was presented to First Generation College Bound, Inc.'s leadership and my doctoral committee.

Section 4: Evaluation and Recommendations

President Obama launched MBK in February 2014 to address persistent opportunity gaps facing boys and young men of color and to ensure all youth can reach their full potential (My Brother's Keeper Alliance, n.d.). Today, the work continues as the MBK Alliance, an initiative of the Obama Foundation, that focuses on building safe and supportive communities for boys and young men of color where they feel valued and have clear pathways to opportunity. The problems facing this initiative are the lack of proper leadership and mentoring programs that can enhance academic success. There is also a challenge in maintaining leadership and ensuring the best mentors are in place to meet the needs of the African American students. I used data gathered from a SWOT analysis to provide direction in the form of priorities, action steps, strategic plans, and changes that the MBK organization should take to meet the needs of African American male students who are often less privileged than their male counterparts of European American origin. The results of this study will also assist the MBK organization to explore strategies to increase the impact of a mentorship program and academic success for African American, male, high school students.

There has been a disparity in academic and employment opportunities in the United States; African Americans, specifically, have not had the same privileges as their European American counterparts even though there has been tremendous transformation in both political, social, and economic aspects of life (Sparks, 2006). This problem is historical, so even if there has been a remarkable transformation, the consequences of the historical injustices still have their roots in many social setups. The MBK initiative,

therefore, offers African American, male students the opportunity to undergo training, pursue education, unlock their potential, become as competitive as their counterparts, and create a generation in which African Americans are in leadership or privileged positions to challenge the common social norms. The MBK initiative aims at reducing or eradicating historical gaps in education, employment, and leadership positions (My Brother's Keeper Alliance, n.d.). Even though the organization has helped over ten thousand (10,000) since its establishment in 2014, there is the need for adjustment or improvement to ensure its continuity and sustainability. It is common for many organizations of this kind to face certain challenges, especially in leadership and management (Sparks, 2006), and MBK is no exception.

In the SWOT analysis, I identified successful organizational and management practices that the MBK initiative can employ to increase their mentoring effectiveness in the future so that the number of African American students benefitting from its programs also increases. Focus groups were important in this SWOT analysis because they were the primary source of information on the leadership gaps that exist in this organization. Factors that may either be hindering success or negatively impacting optimal competency can be revealed with a SWOT analysis. The semistructured questions were also created in a way that tangible and important information could easily be derived from the focus group participants' responses. The fact that the focus group consisted of representatives from all stakeholder groups made the focus group an ideal source of information and data. Because of the similar trends that occur in the First Generation College Bound, Inc., an affiliate of the MBK initiative, it was a good source of data.

From the data collected, I identified the accomplishments and the successes that the organization has achieved since its inception; immediate steps that the stakeholders, especially the teachers, can take to ensure consistent and effective leadership and mentorship; and the tactics that need to be employed to avoid potential negative consequences. All of these are factors to ensure the students achieve academic success through a proper mentorship program. Prior to this SWOT analysis, the organization succeeded in picking or selecting vulnerable, African American, male students and taking them to high schools; ensuring their access colleges or universities; and offering them various opportunities, especially in leadership sectors after their successful completion of school programs. However, a number of challenges make the continuity of this course unsustainable because of the lack of successful leadership practices that can further support more students in their college and career goals to close the existing educational gaps.

Practice-Focused Questions on the Program

The following practice-focused questions guided the SWOT analysis of the MBK program in this study:

Strengths: What are the strengths of the MBK initiative?

- In other words, what and how does this organization do well?

Weaknesses: What are the weaknesses of this organization?

- What does the organization really need to improve to do better than it is doing?

Opportunities: What community opportunities does the organization need to leverage resources and build capacity?

- What resources or opportunities exist that will help MBK initiative continue helping more African American male students and expand their scope and effectiveness?
- What do you think about the organization opportunities?

Threats: What threats might the MBK organization face over the next few years that would make it reduce its scope, the number of students being helped, and its effectiveness in society in its journey towards eliminating the disparity in the educational sector?

Gathering empirical data through a SWOT analysis was the purpose of this postpositivist, constructionist, qualitative case study. In a focus group and interviews, participants identified themes, categories, priorities, and action items the MBK stakeholders and members can incorporate as they develop programs, procedures, and other strategies. These items will aid in strengthening their organizational capacity, completing their short-term goals, and preparing for a long-term strategic planning process. A convenience sampling of MBK stakeholders and volunteers provided internal and external perspectives to consider as the board moves forward in developing a comprehensive strategic plan that would see less and less privileged children, especially African American students, continue to be molded into resourceful people in society through education and leadership mentorship programs.

For this SWOT analysis, I decided that the most appropriate software tool to use to record, track, organize, and conduct the analysis of data was Microsoft Office and NVivo Software. I transferred all data collected from the focus group into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and later saved it in NVivo 12 as well, so I could use the software to identify the themes, categories, priorities, and required actions that would help improve the leadership and mentorship program in the MBK organization. Since some of the responses gathered from the semistructured interviews were audio recorded, I used the NVivo transcription software to transcribe the audio. The transcripts were then saved in a password-protected Word document. I then made manual corrections for some of the dialects that were difficult to transcribe because of the existing language differences among the members of the focus group. The Word document was then transferred to and saved in NVivo 12. In this software, I stored data in various forms, as audio files, Excel spreadsheets, and Word documents. To achieve a holistic synthesis of the most pragmatic and useful pieces of information concerning this organization, I sorted the data into various categories, themes, priorities, and strategies. This gave me a comprehensive overview that would help in the SWOT analysis of MBK organization to ensure I understood what steps need to be taken to either reclaim the strength of the organization or enhance its effectiveness and capacity to help.

After receiving the approval of this study's analysis by the board of MBK stakeholders, I requested to present the study results at the organization's next Annual General Meeting. I then made an overview of the study available and shared the agendas and consent forms. After finishing the presentation, the focus group was notified that the

semistructured interviews were due in a week's time. From the focus group, I selected one mentor to interview and the remaining interviewees were from the leadership team. A report, summarized spreadsheets, and snow cards summarized the information drawn from the focus group. A date was set for the members to participate in the focus group, and the group was requested to set aside an hour to an hour and a half for the activity. On the day of the focus group, all members were present and consent forms were reviewed and verbally agreed on. The time limit was not to exceed 90 minutes; however, participants were aware that they could leave at their convenience once they completed the activity, but all of them stayed. The focus group was conducted via Zoom. I assembled the notes, activity sheets, and all the materials relevant to the components of the SWOT analysis. I conducted the focus group by focusing on the priorities and action items to include in the organization's mission and vision for the next generation of students, leaders, and the stakeholders' strategic plan. The board of stakeholders enlisted ideas that could be immediately adopted, and each member was asked to identify a success they think was achieved. These documents were then typed and transferred into an Excel spreadsheet and uploaded into NVivo 12.

Findings and Implications

The empirical data obtained in this SWOT analysis contains both external and internal perspectives worthy of including in the final results of the study. Through analysis, I was able to determine the organization's priorities, its successes and accomplishments, immediate steps or actions that it needs to take, future requirements or necessities, long-term policies to incorporate in its internal and external affairs, and what

the organization should avoid for the future success in its mission and vision for African American students. The analysis also enabled the board, that consists of all the stakeholders, to complete the strategic plans for capacity building and sustainability of the organization's initiative. During the data gathering process, components for coming up with proper mentorship programs for African American, high school students was addressed. Additionally, there was a focus on building and maintaining proper and effective leadership to ensure that the best mentors are in place to meet the needs of the students. In the following subsections, I describe the findings from the selected focus groups and the semistructured interviews.

Report and Analysis of Focus Group

The focus groups, that took place over Zoom, provided an opportunity for each stakeholder to give their opinion on each of the SWOT topics and participate in a session devoted to each of the topics. Each person was given time to brainstorm on each topic and later share their outlook with the group. During analysis, I organized these ideas into clusters. Each cluster was labeled as a category within my notes. Members were then asked to vote on priorities and action items where each member had five red stickers and five green for each activity (color coded in writing with the color and number related the participant). The red was for prioritized categories while the green was for action items they wanted to continue, improve, or implement immediately. The results were then captured in notes and via dialogue.

Strengths

The focus group identified three categories of strengths listed in order of priority as affordability of the program (i.e., the program was affordable to most African American male students); it enabled most African American students to graduate, thus closing the educational gaps caused by the historical inequality in the educational sector; and that the program enabled students to finish school with little or no debt. One of the respondents said, “I never believed that my son could ever get such an opportunity in this society to scale to such a greater height.”

Weaknesses

This group realized certain weaknesses listed in order of priority as: changing mindsets, untrusted environments, and lack of consistency. The group decided that to correct this, the action items for keeping, improving, or implementing that needed to immediately change were the mindsets of all stakeholders concerning this initiative. Staying consistent with their course of action, increasing their efforts, and staying resilient are a few of the changes that are needed. It was noted that: “Better training is needed to ensure that the students are receiving the best tools to help them to be successful.”

Opportunities

The focus group identified the categories of opportunities as acquiring partnerships with the state, advocating for low-income students, 95% program acceptance of low-income students, college partnerships, hiring nonprofit organizations to lead the program, advocacy, policy and legislation that promotes the programs, and training other

nonprofit firms to have interest and engagement in the program. It was stressed that, “Increasing our efforts to obtain partnerships could help us to improve program efforts.” Additionally, it was noted that more partnerships “could also help us to potentially make scholarship opportunities more accessible to the mentees.”

Threats

This category consists of internal, external, and political factors. Internal factors included lack of proper leadership within the organization, lack of effective mentorship programs laid for this course, and poor response from the students. It was also noted that better transparency was needed, “More transparency regarding the distribution of funds would be advantageous.” External factors included little support from other organizations and partners. Political factors included other powerful people’s interest in this program that create an unfavorable environment for other potential partners and nonprofit organizations.

Report and Analysis of the Semistructured Interviews

Semistructured interview participants had to come up with a list of items for each of the SWOT topics and prioritize the contents of the list in a way to decide the tasks that were urgent as follows in this documentation.

Strengths

Data revealed that eternal stakeholders value the board members of this organization, their efforts towards molding the students into leaders, their empathy, understanding, and their approachability. All of the participants agreed that the program had an impact on its beneficiaries with most appreciating the situational leadership being

carried out within the organization. The situational leadership model involves leadership styles, i.e., coach; having the ability to work with mentees and other mentors through formal and informal issues acting as a resource; support which means being available and attentive to the needs and of mentees when called upon, direct; having the ability to be transparent and address good and bad situations at all times, and delegate; using resources when they do not have the answer to ensure that the mentee's needs are met that are adaptable to the employees' development behavior. Successful leaders have the capability to consider situations from various perspectives. They evaluate the behaviors of teams and situations in the play, after which they assess the different ways of leadership to drive the best outcome. Generally, the participants appreciated the different activities and programs offered to students that keep them involved and build new competent skills.

Weaknesses

There were fewer weaknesses than strengths; however, the weaknesses that were identified were very important because they could change the overall look of the organization. Highly rated weakness indicated a lack of best or more competent mentors to meet the needs of the students. The participants argued that the organization, as currently constituted, does not have the capacity to absorb and retain highly qualified coaches and mentors who can meet the needs of the students. The participant added that dealing with male high school students is not an easy task since it requires more attention, empathy, and professionalism to understand and respond to their needs and emotions all the time. One participant cited the lack of adequate domestic partnerships, donations, and lobbying to bring more funds into the program to ensure its continuity and sustainability

and to make sure it absorbs more needy students. He added that even if the organization had everything but does not have adequate programmatic funding, the initiative would still stumble and fall because it is expensive to source for and retain professionals like coaches, teachers, and mentors. Communication is also a theme that was brought about by one of the participants. She argued that there was a weakness in the sector of communication adding that communication is the inherent foundation upon which the whole relationship grows and develops. She added that successful communication is a two-way process, sending and receiving from within the stakeholders, and between the mentors and the mentees.

Opportunities

All participants recognized that the MBK initiative has numerous opportunities they can take advantage of to build capacity and sustainability and to ensure more and more less-privileged students enjoy the educational and leadership benefits of this initiative. Most importantly, these opportunities involve devising ways of raising more individual and foundation funds, expanding the network and scope of the initiative, and creating and sharing opportunities. One of the participants argued that the organization could seek donations from nonprofit organizations worldwide. Another participant argued that partnering with the state would be the best since it would ensure that the state sets aside some funds for the project. This, according to the participant, would be achieved through legislation. The legislation would mean that law is put forth that would compel any government irrespective of the government leaders or the elected officials to make it a routine in their budget that some funds are set aside for the continuity of this program

and for its expansion. Another participant pointed out networking as an opportunity that the board can take advantage of immediately. He suggested that knowing the process it takes to get clients registered, the process of connecting to other organizations that support education, and the process of lobbying them would be the best exploration for the board members. College partnerships also came out as an opportunity worth exploring from one of the participants. According to this participant, there are many colleges that are willing to offer scholarships to less privileged students. Partnering with these institutions would ensure a smooth transition and less burden, since some students' needs would be already covered by such institutions. It would also be easy for these students to access college once they complete high school.

Threats

Even though this is a non-profit organization, there are both internal and external threats that cause concern. Internal threats, according to the responses from the semistructured questions, include mismanagement of funds and incompetency on the side of mentors and coaches. Corruption is a worldwide cancer, killing most organizations and this would not be an exception. Mismanagement of funds meant to sustain some programs and retain human resources would make it challenging to smoothly run its organization. Also, hiring incompetent mentors and coaches to deal with students would prove futile because dealing with people of this age requires experience, empathy, and good communication skills because of their special needs.

Analysis of Evidence

All the data for the SWOT analysis were stored in Microsoft documents and NVivo 12 software to spot the areas the organization is doing well, what they need to do differently, the resources available at their disposal, and what the board and stakeholders need to change or put into consideration for the future of this organization. The participants listed all the plans, strategies, and immediate steps that would make the organization great as indicated in the following data.

Focus Group Analysis and Synthesis

This is the analysis reviewing the data collected from the focus group activity as voted by the group and frequently used Wordsearch in the NVivo software.

Strengths

Categories, priorities, and action items addressing the strengths of the First Generation College Bound, Inc. documents a list of items in the focus group exercise. The number one in the categories was the organization's affordability to most students of color in the country. It was established that, unlike other programs, the MBK initiative was the most affordable since even the poor could have the opportunity to enjoy the program. The second-highest category was that the initiative allowed most students to graduate. The initiative opened the doors of opportunities and possibilities for many African American male students at every step in their academic and career journey enabling many students to graduate. The third in the category of strengths was that the initiative ensured that while finishing school, students had very little or no debts to worry about since the program took care of their needs. This data were recorded in a word

document then downloaded into the NVivo 12 software. All the existing data corresponded with this information.

Weaknesses

The weakness exercise resulted in a list of more than 10 items but out of these, only five items were identified. The first category involved a lack of consistency among the stakeholders. Other issues that were noticed as the major weaknesses were: the changing mindsets, untrusted environments, nonmeeting efforts, and retracting, in that order. A frequently used word search for weaknesses using NVivo 12 identified similar words the group agreed on but did not necessarily vote on as priorities or important action items except untrusted environments that appeared similar in the software search items.

Opportunities

There was a list of opportunities that went beyond ten in number even though only five categories were identified with the group and action items. What became outstanding as an opportunity was advocacy. The second that was most witnessed was college partnerships, followed by 95% approval of low-income African American male students, then policy legislation. Advocacy and college partnerships were seen as the most unexplored opportunities for the organization since there are many colleges in the country that if partnerships are created, many students would be connected to such opportunities. Public support or recommendation of this initiative could be achieved through proper advocacy. In fact, it was established that if some of the stakeholders of

this initiative would advocate for such a program, many doors of funding and support opportunities would automatically open.

Threats

The last session of the focus group was identifying the threats to the organization. There were ten threats identified but three were distinguished as those that required immediate action. The order of priority of the threats was lack of proper leadership and mentorship that can enable the continuity of academic success, lack of effective mentorship programs since the ones that exist would be outdated, and the risk of poor response from students as a result of the two threats.

Semistructured Interview Analysis and Synthesis

Questions for the semistructured interviews were the same for the focus group. A total of four questions were asked during the semistructured interviews covering the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats relating to the MBK Initiative. After transcribing the data collected, corrections were manually made and only words that could be transcribed were recorded. Since there was no participant category, only immediate strategies were included. A word search was used to reveal the top words from the NVivo search as indicated in this section.

Strengths

Strengths were the first focus in the SWOT analysis semistructured interview process. Data collected from the semistructured interview identified the ability of the MBK organization's ability to mold students into future leaders, their empathy, understanding, and approachability as the list of strengths of this organization. All

participants concurred that indeed, the organization was transformational since the products of the program were seen as future leaders. All the participants also agreed that the teachers, mentors, and coaches in this program showed uttermost empathy to the students and that they were easily approachable and understanding. Additional comments indicated the activities sponsored by the organization are appreciated, all-inclusive, and meet the social needs of the students.

Weaknesses

The second issue or topic in any SWOT analysis is weaknesses. A priority list of weaknesses obtained from the data that contained more than ten weaknesses included lack of capacity to absorb and retain highly qualified coaches, mentors, and instructors, lack of enough partnerships, donations, lobbying, and lack of proper communication. These weaknesses were determined by a search in the NVivo 12 search of frequently used words. Communication was stressed by one of the participants as a core value in any organization. She argued that there was a weakness in the sector of communication adding that communication is the inherent foundation upon which the whole relationship grows and develops. She added that successful communication is a two-way process, sending and receiving from within the stakeholders, and between the mentors and the mentees.

Opportunities

The third topic in a SWOT analysis semistructured interview is the opportunities. There were fifteen opportunities listed by the semistructured interview participants but most revolved around the acquisition of funds. The software identified donations from

nonprofit organizations, state partnerships, legislation, networking, more college partnerships, and lobbying. Collaboration and identification of additional resources were also seen as a way that can lead to additional funding sources or services not yet provided by public or private entities.

Threats

Threat is the last topic in a SWOT analysis. A list of threats was identified in the semistructured interviews and out of the 10 possible threats, three were identified. They included better transparency on the allotment of funds by the organization, as well as ensuring that there are better qualified mentors, instructors, and coaches. Comments about corruption indicated that the process of recruiting students to this program was corrupted as some officials would demand bribes to absorb some students. Also, mismanagement of funds meant for the program's activities is a potential threat to the success of the organization. A participant noted that some funds would be diverted elsewhere instead of channeling them to this initiative. Finally, the third threat was that some of the people hired to manage the program or interact with the students did not have sufficient qualifications to either mentor, teach, or coach the students, culminating in poor academic progress.

Evaluation and Recommendations of Data Collected

Key aspects identified by these semistructured interviews prove that the First Generation College Bound, Inc. would benefit from developing an overall strategic plan. Corporation among stakeholders and consulting among the members and board members would be the first step in building a rapport and a solid organization that speaks one

language. The SWOT analysis identified strategic issues described by Bryson and Alston (2011) as being at the heart of the strategic planning process. Their worksheets provide instructions on putting the data together with more detail.

Unanticipated Limitations and their Impacts

One of the unanticipated limitations during this study was the delay experienced in completing this study. It began by forming the research questions, rehearsing the semistructured interview process, and learning how to use and operate some software that was going to be used during data analysis such as NVivo 12, spreadsheets, and Microsoft Word. At some point, semistructured interviews had to be postponed due to unavoidable circumstances. Data collected from the semistructured interviews contained all the information the organizations need for its sustainability.

Implications for Positive Change for First Generation College Bound, Inc.

Since the early days, there has been a social justice issue in the United States' educational history. This has resulted in the existing college and educational gaps. Data from the SWOT analysis indicates that mentorship programs, such as FGCB, are becoming a model education provider for the privileged African American students. Thus, when supported, many young African American students will have their lives transformed.

FGCB will greatly benefit from this SWOT analysis. The internal perspectives provided by the participants in this study, could serve as a message to other organizations and educational institutions. There is a need for collaboration with such initiatives so that the educational gaps that exist can be closed.

First Generation College Bound, Inc. Recommendations

First Generation College Bound, Inc., leadership must lay a strong foundation in order to stay aligned to its mission and vision which are to: enable equal opportunities for all boys and young men of color and to build safe, supportive communities for young boys and men of color where they feel valued. Even though MBK has been providing life-changing services since its establishment in 2014, a time has come to take immediate action for improvement and begin considering long-term strategies for future decades. The NVivo 12 search and the SWOT analysis contains answers provided by the focus group and semistructured interviews. The data suggests that the board of this organization may wish to improve its organization structure, implement best practices, and create plans to steer the vision and mission of the organization through developing programs and systems that will review their periodical success. Perhaps, MBK should initiate a formal strategic planning process to align its strategy with new realities of the market and programmatic needs. The focus group and semistructured interviews suggested that the organization should concentrate on community, sustainability, funding, and resources.

The recommendations in this section will ensure that the major challenges facing this organization, which include lack of leadership and mentorship, are tackled. Management issues such as how to host and manage events like donations and fundraisers are also discussed in this section. Recruiting and maintaining competent coaches and mentors requires that the organization is functional in all its dimensions of operation.

Policies to Address Problems

The data provided some policies that were enhance the structure of First Generation College bound, Inc. According to Bryson (2004), SWOT analysis is an important tool for identifying and implementing policies. This SWOT analysis shows that there exist immediate policies that should be enacted. Items that need to be addressed are: policy development; membership; volunteering; fundraising; lobbying; recruiting nonprofit organizations to manage the organization; training and retaining competent coaches, instructors, teachers, and mentors, and increasing their numbers to reduce child-mentor ratios.

Practice Guidelines to Address Problem

Both data collected from the focus group and the semistructured interviews, suggested that there be guidelines in the form of goals that were guide the organization. The list of suggested guidelines that should be developed are identified below:

- Lobbying – Community lobbying and lobbying responsibilities.
- Legislation and responsibilities.
- Consensus decision making.
- Hosting organizational events.
- Hiring of coaches, mentors, and all personnel.
- Communication.
- Donations - What is the process for accepting donations, who accepts them, are there forms available, how are they filled out and what happens to them after

- Identification of partnerships.
- Eligibility requirements of student participants.
- How to handle the student's behavior within the premise.
- Hosting events - How to start. Who is in charge of any event and what does it take?

Protocols to Address Problem

Some of the problems that need to be addressed include the hiring of qualified mentors, coaches, and instructors. Recruiting students into this program is also an issue that should be addressed. The board should consider employing professional behavioral health specialists who can interview and recruit the most competent and qualified professionals into this program. Training of these members of staff should also be done by professionals. Students are also required to occasionally give their reviews on the mentors and coaches. Fundraising events require more commitment from the organization. Such commitments involve selling raffle tickets, playing games, performances from students, talent shows, among others. Also, during such events, safety measures must be put into consideration because they attract different people of all facets of life. To ensure security, the organization should consider using name tags and other identifiers. Space, equipment, and materials needed for such functions is important to consider and this would require the organization to contact respective individuals for this. Other topics that would require protocol instruction are visitor sign-ins and donations.

Standards to Address the First Generation College Bound, Inc. Problems

Specific standards were detected for MBK stakeholders to adhere to when representing the organization through the focus group SWOT analysis. Setting rules and coming up with a constitution guiding the conduct and the procedures within the organization will maintain its standards and ensure order. Each stakeholder, from the donors to the students, must have a copy of these set rules and regulations governing the organization and a section in the organization's wall should have a pinned copy of it.

Terms identifying standards from the participants are: professionalism, respect, students service (empathy, understanding, meeting their needs, humor, open, welcoming), welcoming visitors or individuals seeking assistance with a willingness to help, transportation (reliable vehicle with insurance), funding sources (what type of funding agencies do they want to be associated with), self-care, spiritual development and practices, thanksgiving address, keep brochures updated, internal communication, and continuing to learn about current trends in treatment, drugs, other service providers.

Plan Elements to Address the First Generation College Bound, Inc. Problems

To strengthen and realize the sustainability of the First Generation College Bound, Inc., participants identified certain specific plans to strategize. Data indicated these areas to be recruitment/admission of students, donations, college partnerships, state partnership, lobbying/legislation, and recruitment/retention of professionals. There should be an elaborate plan and a fair selection criterion for selecting students who are willing and qualified to join this program. The target organizations to pursue for donations should also be listed after a thorough consultation of all the stakeholders. Target colleges

and universities that the organization wishes to partner with in this noble endeavor should also be listed and a select committee that will assume this role on behalf of the organization should also be selected. This would ease the transition of students to colleges is smooth since there would be available opportunities to choose from. Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that the organization completes the plan elements for each subject through an additional meeting using methods defined by Bryson & Alston (2011) and Institute of Cultural Affairs - USA (2016). The First Generation College Bound, Inc. should come up with the requirements and procedures of carrying the above procedures and a time frame to ensure each action plan is done perfectly. A membership plan, with levels and ways to exhibit commitment from all the stakeholders, should also be developed by the organization.

Strengths and Limitations of the Project

The organization's wiliness to reevaluate its current status is the greatest strength, as it focuses on its sustainability and the future of young men. However, it proved futile to interview some of the most important stakeholders due to tight schedules and unforeseen circumstances. The data shows that the board leads from their heart and that members, too, are concerned with the success of African American male students as they are aware that they are not privileged like others. Nevertheless, the impediments did not impede the findings as the data collected were more than enough to help and guide the future decisions of MBK.

In this analysis, the questions in the semistructured interviews were many thus, it took a long time to finish. Participants were very critical with the process. This resulted

in some participants being bored, fatigued, and anxious which can interfere with the credibility of their responses. In the future, there is a need to look into this factor, which means coming up with extra activities and base active questions that may keep the participants lively. Icebreakers and games may be a solution to keep future focus group participants lively and active.

Summary

A SWOT analysis was determined to be the best way to find out what the First Generation College Bound, Inc. needed for its sustainability and effective provision of education and mentorship programs focused on male youths of color. Enough data were obtained from the analysis that determined critical success factors for plans, policies, procedures, and requirements that would ensure the organization stays in the course of its mission and vision. This SWOT analysis provided insight as to how to ensure continued college enrollment and positively impact academic achievement among these groups of students. The social justice issue and educational gap that began in the early days of the United States' educational history was addressed through this analysis. If the organization adopts the recommended action plans and strategies, the future of many students of color will be secured because it will give them the opportunity to be competent for the opportunities that are available. The skills these students will acquire will make them competitive for the most lucrative opportunities.

Section 5: Dissemination Plan

In this study, I identified the plans, policies, procedures, and requirements that the MBK board, in collaboration with the stakeholders, needs to focus on to ensure the mission and vision of the organization are achieved. The responses from the focus group and semistructured interviews provided data and recommendations that the board should follow to create favorable policies, procedures, and guideline manuals that address issues of significant importance within the organization and that can be used to guide the relationship among the stakeholders and students.

With the results of this study, I would like to create an executive summary in line with the Walden professional administrative study checklist. Some sections will contain duplicate components, and these are the problems that need to be solved, purpose, solutions, and resources available. I would also like to develop a strategy to win partnerships as well as attract donations, well-wishers, and better qualified professionals to the organization. In all these cases, proper communication would be vital. Because stakeholders are in different geographical locations, I would ensure each receives communication in time, utilizing social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn. I would also use the print and digital media to advertise and lobby for donations and partnerships while citing the achievements and the purpose of the organizations. This could include local newspapers, magazines, and television channels to reach a large audience.

Summary

I will use different avenues to disseminate the results of this SWOT analysis. After creating an all-encompassing presentation, copies of the study will be distributed to the relevant stakeholders. They will then convene in a meeting to discuss their concerns regarding the findings, after which I will be present to answer any emerging questions. I will also post a summary of the study on the First Generation College Bound, Inc. policy wall located in the FGCB building and provide MBK officials with a copy so that all the members can access it and give their feedback. The future of the First Generation College Bound, Inc. depends on proper strategic planning, and it is on that note that I present this SWOT analysis to guide the process. I welcome any contrary opinion with impartiality.

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Appendix: Semistructured Interview/Focus Group Questions

Program Overview

1. Do you feel that FBCG is adequately achieving the intended mission and vision of the organization and why?

Training and Professional Development

1. What are some of the FGCB strengths?
2. What are some of the FGCB weaknesses?
3. What are some ideal improvements, if any, do you feel need to be made?

Funding

1. Do you believe the program is receiving the adequate funding necessary to carry out its mission and functions?

Curriculum

1. Do you feel that the program curriculum requires any updates? If so, what do you feel needs to be changed?

Program Impact

1. Do you feel that the strategies the organization has used to make a direct impact toward envisioned goals are effective?
2. Where should impact focus shift to ensure greater accomplishment of program goals?

Section 2: First Generation College Bound Interview Questions

College Success

1. Are the current measures used for tracking the vision of college success effective?

Great Minds Great Futures

1. What would you personally change about Great Minds Great Futures to improve the program?

HomeWork Club

1. Do you feel that the current protocols that mentors must adhere to are effective in instilling attributes for success that will impact students through both high school and college?
2. Do you feel that it is important for mentees to have mentors that they can relate to through identity? Do you feel like it has benefitted mentees? Why?