

11-20-2023

School Counselors' Perspectives on Drama-Free Tweens Program for Black Tween Girls' Behavior

Linda Thomas Poindexter
Walden University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies Collection at ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact ScholarWorks@waldenu.edu.

Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Linda Thomas Poindexter

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Leslie VanGelder, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty

Dr. Heather Caldwell, Committee Member, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost

Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University

2023

Abstract

School Counselors' Perspectives on Drama-Free Tweens Program

for Black Tween Girls' Behavior

by

Linda Thomas Poindexter

Ed.S, Walden University, 2013

MS, Tennessee State University, 2006

BS, Tennessee State University, 2004

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2023

Abstract

The problem addressed in this study was the increase in discipline infractions during the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school years among Black six-grade tween girls in Jefferson County Schools (JCS, a pseudonym). The numbers indicated a 44% increase in discipline infractions over a 4-year period. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the *Drama-Free Tweens* (DFT) program on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. The conceptual framework for this project study was Skinner's behaviorism theory. The research questions focused on the school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and needed improvements on the DFT program on Black tween girls in schools. Purposeful sampling was used to select eight school counselors. Data were collected using semistructured interviews. Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic coding from which the following themes emerged: extending the program outside the school environment through mentorship, providing relevant information on social media, and updating the program's technology. These themes informed the project, and a white paper was developed. The findings may support positive social change by applying the program with the recommendations; school counselors will have a guide to assist with behavioral concerns to decrease discipline infractions and improve the lives and futures of Black tween girls.

School Counselors' Perspectives on Drama-Free Tweens Program

for Black Tween Girls' Behavior

by

Linda Thomas Poindexter

Ed.S, Walden University, 2013

MS, Tennessee State University, 2006

BS, Tennessee State University, 2004

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2023

Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my mother, Linda Love Thomas, who never doubted my ability to complete this rigorous process. She has been my cheerleader and constant voice of encouragement. She is my daily reminder of what I aim to be and what I know is possible. I am forever indebted to her support and unconditional love.

Also, I would like to dedicate this degree to my grandparents, Mary E. Love and Thomas N. Love. Unfortunately, they could not focus on educational endeavors due to historical circumstances. However, they both empowered me to seek greatness, and I never felt inferior because of their wisdom and unwavering support. This degree is not only for me but for them. I hope I made you proud; I love and miss you both dearly.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge the head of my life, God, for making this possible. When I contemplated starting this journey, there was abundant doubt and uncertainty. A little voice always reassured me to keep persevering; to God be the glory!

Thank you to my partner in life, Gary Walton Jr.; you have shown me such patience and support during this journey. This degree could not have been accomplished without you telling me to go for it and giving me strength in moments when I couldn't find any. My boys, Jay and Gary Trey, you were my constant motivation and drive. I hope I showed you that anything could be accomplished if you put God first and persevere. To my friends and family, thank you for listening to my many venting sessions and constant updates, especially my mother, Linda Love Thomas, and sisters, Corrine Thomas and Dr. Erica Jordan Thomas. I am grateful for everyone's love and support during this process.

This project study could not have happened without my local school system approving my partnership. Thank you to the superintendent, Dr. G, for giving this study a chance and allowing me to interview your school counselors. Thank you to all the school counselors, who allowed me to capture your reflections on the DFT program with your Black tween girls. You are change agents for your students. Lastly, I want to acknowledge my chair and committee members. Thank you to my chair, Dr. Leslie VanGelder, for your constant positive feedback and encouragement that shaped me as a scholar. My committee member, Dr. Heather Caldwell, thank you for your detailed eye. You both helped this process come to fruition, and I am forever thankful.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Section 1: The Problem.....	1
The Local Problem.....	1
Rationale	3
Definition of Terms.....	4
Significance of the Study	5
Research Questions	6
Review of the Literature	6
Conceptual Framework	6
Review of the Broader Problem.....	8
The Role of the School Counselor	8
Tween Girls.....	12
Small Group Programs.....	14
Black Girls' Discipline.....	16
Implications.....	17
Summary	19
Section 2: The Methodology.....	20
Qualitative Research Design and Approach	20
Participants.....	21
Criteria and Justification	21
Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants	23

Researcher–Participant Relationship	24
Protection of Participants’ Rights	25
Confidentiality	27
Informed Consent.....	27
Protection From Harm	28
Data Collection	29
Description and Justification for Data Collection.....	31
Data Collection Instrument.....	31
Sufficiency of Data Collection.....	32
Processes for Data.....	32
Systems for Keeping Track of Data.....	33
Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants.....	34
Role of the Researcher	35
Data Analysis	36
Evidence of Quality	40
Procedures for Dealing With Discrepant Cases	41
Data Analysis Results	41
Patterns, Relationships, and Themes	42
Results of the RQs	44
Research Question 1.....	45
Research Question 2.....	52
Research Question 3.....	56
Summary	63

Section 3: The Project	65
Introduction.....	65
Description and Goals.....	66
Rationale	67
Review of the Literature	67
Scholarly Rationale of White Papers	68
Mentorship	69
Social Media	71
Technology.....	73
Project Description.....	74
Needed Resources and Existing Supports.....	75
Potential Barriers and Solutions.....	75
Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others	76
Project Evaluation Plan	77
Project Implications	78
Summary	79
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	80
Project Strengths and Limitations.....	80
Strengths.....	80
Limitations and Remediation.....	81
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches	82
Scholarship.....	83
Project Development and Evaluation.....	84

Leadership and Change.....	85
Analysis of Self as Scholar	86
Analysis of Self as Practitioner	87
Analysis of Self as Project Developer	87
Reflection on Importance of the Work	88
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research	89
Conclusion	90
References.....	92
Appendix A: The Project	119
Appendix B: Partnership Approval.....	139
Appendix C: Interview Questions.....	141
Appendix D: Audit Trail of Study Procedures	142

List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Pseudonyms	25
Table 2. Participant Demographics	26
Table 3. Initial Code Frequencies	38
Table 4. Grouping of Codes into Finalized Themes	39
Table 5. Research Questions and Their Corresponding Themes	44
Table 6. Research Question 1 Themes.....	46
Table 7. Research Question 2 Themes.....	52
Table 8. Research Question 3 Themes.....	57

List of Figures

Figure 1. Total Number of Discipline Infractions for Sixth Grade Black Tween

Girls, 2016–2020..... 2

Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The local problem is that there was an increase in discipline infractions during the 2016–2017, 2017–2018, 2018–2019, and 2019–2020 school years among Black sixth-grade tween girls in Jefferson County Schools (JCS, a pseudonym). The numbers indicated a 44% increase in discipline infractions over a 4-year period. According to several local school counselors in JCS, there has been an increase in discipline concerns among their Black tween girls. The school counselors stated that there were limited resources that uniquely met the current needs of behavior concerns for their Black tween girls. The Drama-Free Tweens (DFT) program is a small-group program designed to assist school counselors with their tweens' inappropriate behavior and assist with success in the school setting. Despite using the DFT program, the discipline infractions have increased for Black tween girls from 2016–2020.

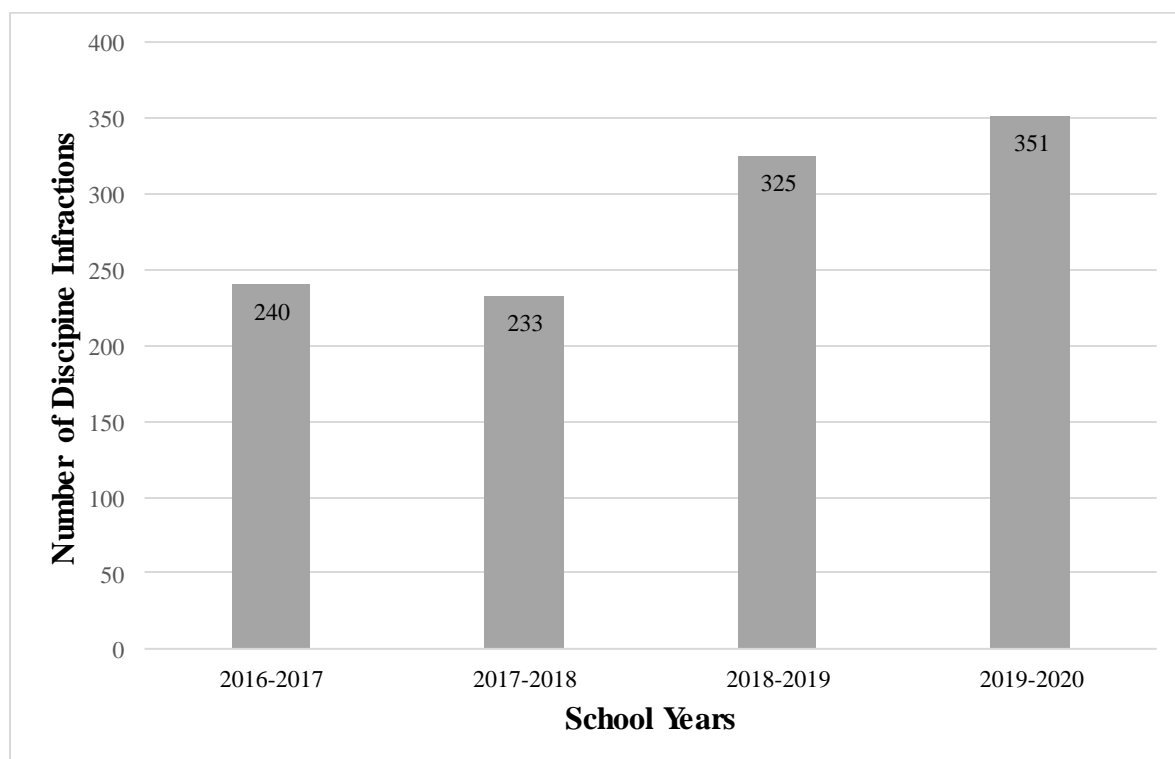
The American School Counselor Association (ASCA; 2022b) sent a questionnaire to 6,000 ASCA members in December 2021 aimed at learning more about how school counselors and schools encourage diversity, equality, and inclusion. According to the research, 45% of the schools lacked culturally appropriate curricula/programs, and even when they did, little progress has been made in eliminating disparities in the school setting. Specifically, it was noted that school counselors spearheaded 54% of school programs addressing culturally appropriate programs.

Research indicated that school counselors and comprehensive school counseling programs play an essential role in addressing social and emotional issues that impede

student achievement, such as implementing small groups programs to support Black tween girls (ASCA, 2019; Bostick & Anderson, 2009; Cheng et al., 2020; Steen, 2011). Mayes et al. (2021) explored the experiences of Black girls and their school counselors. They discovered that when prepared with knowledge and information on the unique needs of Black girls in schools, school counselors can be key advocates in their support of Black girls (Mayes et al., 2021). Therefore, there was a need to explore school counselors' perspectives on needed improvements of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in the schools.

Figure 1

Total Number of Discipline Infractions for Sixth Grade Black Tween Girls, 2016–2020



Rationale

The problem I addressed with this basic qualitative study was the increasing number of discipline infractions among sixth-grade Black tween girls in JCS. According to a local school counselor in JCS, Black tween girls exhibited increased behavior concerns and limited resources to assist with their unique needs. Neth et al. (2020) noted that tween girls need a support system within the school setting to guide them during this critical developmental stage. Moreover, research indicated that Black tween girls need appropriate programs that encourage academic and emotional success in the school environment (Aston et al., 2018; Fallon et al., 2022). The school counselor has an essential role in helping tweens navigate this stage. Specifically, school counselors provide small-group programs to support Black tweens girls' success in school (ASCA, 2019). Unfortunately, school discipline infractions have increased despite school counselors implementing the DFT program among their Black tween girls. Therefore, there was a need to explore ways to help improve the DFT programs to assist school counselors with increased behavior infractions among their Black tween girls in the schools.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the DFT programs on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. A report by the Commission on Black Girls (2020) analyzed previous research. The commission surveyed 422 Black girls regarding their quality of life, including their school experiences, and conducted focus groups. It was discovered that 70% of the participants

had experienced increased discipline in the form of suspension, detention, and expulsion. According to the results, numerous participants voiced concerns about many school programs existing, but few programs suited their unique needs. Additionally, participants felt a lack of support in school with limited advocates which further supported the need to explore the school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the DFT programs that would benefit Black girls' behavior in the school environment.

Definition of Terms

Behavior: A overt reaction by an individual that can be observed or is functionally significant in the present environment (Uher, 2016).

Discipline infractions: A school office referral resulting in a suspension, alternative setting placement, or corporal punishment (Alabama State Department of Education, 2022).

Drama-Free Tweens: A 10-lesson small-group program designed for tween girls to teach practical coping strategies, by teaching tweens how to express themselves appropriately to succeed in the school setting. Overall, the goal is to help improve behavior in the school environment (Poindexter, 2014).

School counselors: A qualified educator that implements a school counseling programs that improve student outcomes.

They lead, advocate, and collaborate to promote equity and access for all students by connecting their school counseling program to the school's academic mission and school improvement plan. They uphold the ethical and professional standards of ASCA and promote the development of the school counseling program based

on the following areas of the ASCA National Model: define, deliver, manage, and assess. (ASCA, 2019a, p. 2)

Small group programs: A school counselor uses specialized knowledge to determine current issues or themes among students in their school environment to establish small-group programs. Small group counseling programs focuses on a small number of students with similar concerns to help improve those identified areas in a safe, trusted environment. These needs are determined by student data, a referral procedure, or other pertinent data (ASCA, 2020).

Tween: A child between the age of eight and 12, often referred to as the preadolescent development stage (Bulimwengu & Cartmel, 2022).

Significance of the Study

The study is significant to the local setting because it fills a gap in practice by providing school counselors with research-based strategies to assist with Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. According to Wolf and Kupchik (2017), exclusionary discipline has harmful long-term implications. More specifically, evidence indicated that out-of-school suspensions are a significant predictor of high school dropout, preventing suspended kids from enrolling in postsecondary education or pursuing employment (Balfanz et al., 2014; Cheng et al., 2020; Welsh & Little, 2018).

Aston et al. (2018), Fallon et al. (2022), and McPherson (2020) emphasized that Black tween girls need specialized programs that encourage academic and emotional success in the school environment. Additionally, Aston et al. suggested that educators must focus on cultivating interventions that are culturally appropriate for Black girls to

establish school-based support. This study supports positive social change by exploring school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the DFT programs for Black tween girls' behavior in schools. Following the implementation of the improvements, school counselors will have recommendations to help them build rapport and support their Black tween girls navigate this critical developmental stage and assist with behavioral concerns to decrease discipline infractions.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the successes of the Drama-Free Tweens program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?

RQ2: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the challenges of the Drama-Free Tweens program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?

RQ3: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the Drama-Free Tweens program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Skinner's (1953) behaviorism theory. I used this framework to provide insight and offer guidance on ways to explore the increased behavior infractions among Black tween girls in JSC and school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the DFT programs to assist with the local problem. The underlying premise of this theory is that external stimuli can influence one's behavior (Skinner, 1953). The control of changes in behavior and how

the environment affects these changes has been defined as behaviorism (Dastpak et al., 2017). Lan and Sher (2019) noted that an essential characteristic of behaviorism is that behavior is maintained by its outcomes; as a result, behavior evolves as support options change.

According to the behaviorist viewpoint, motivating conduct is based on a link, or association, between an environmental stimulus and an individual's reaction (A. Kaplan & Patrick, 2016). If a reaction is strengthened, it develops into a habit (Dastpak et al., 2017). Operant conditioning is one of two learning paradigms that characterize behaviorism, first established by Watson and subsequently revisited by Skinner in the 1940s. The relationship between an incentive and behavior, or results of the behavior (Kretchmar, 2014), and behaviors as they are sustained with the help of consequences, or effects of the activity. This is highlighted by operant conditioning (Armstrong et al., 2014).

According to the principles of operant conditioning (Öğretir Özçelik, 2017), an individual would generally increase the occurrence of reactions that tend to reward them. The theory of operant conditioning is based on the idea that environmental factors influence behavior by increasing or decreasing rewards or punishments; unpleasant behaviors may fade away, while good behaviors persist and strengthen (Dastpak et al., 2017). Understanding the perspectives of the school counselors helped to determine areas needed to improve the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools.

Review of the Broader Problem

The focus of this research was the influence of school counselors emphasizing the local setting have in using the DFT program to influence positively Black tween girls' behavior in the schools. The school counselor's role and the impact of small-group programs have been extensively researched. The literature review also addressed the development stage for tween girls including the impact of the middle school transition. The review continues with highlighting the literature on Black tween girls' discipline in the school environment.

To locate peer-reviewed articles and journals for this review, I searched the following databases and educational search engines: SAGE, Google Scholar, Education Source and ERIC. The following key search words were used: *school counselors, small group counseling, small groups, small group interventions, small-group programs, tweens, tween girls, Black girls, African American girls, behavior, school discipline, pre-adolescents, school programs/services, counseling programs, preteen, and middle school girls.*

The Role of the School Counselor

The school counselor's role is critical to the success of all students in the school environment. ASCA (2023) stated,

School counselors design and deliver school counseling programs that improve student outcomes. They lead, advocate, and collaborate to promote equity and access for all students by connecting their school counseling program to the school's academic mission and school improvement plan. (p. 2)

Additionally, school counselors must maintain and encourage the development of the school counseling program based on the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019a). The ASCA National Model serves as a guide for the school counselor's comprehensive counseling program, which incorporates the components of define, deliver, manage, and assess.

Define

The define component encompasses three sets of school counseling standards: the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success, Ethical, and Counselors' Professional Standards. These standards help all school counselors establish, implement, and evaluate their school counseling program to enhance student success (ASCA, 2019a).

Deliver

The deliver component includes the school counselor providing the students with age-appropriate programs and services directly or indirectly. These services assist the students with the development of the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success Standards and improve overall student achievement (ASCA, 2019a).

Manage

The manage component emphasizes that the school counselor implementing a quality school counseling program must manage it effectively. This includes the school counselor establishing a school counseling program with beliefs, a vision, and a mission statement. Additionally, this component comprises the school counseling program planning, which may consist of yearly/weekly calendars, lesson and action plans, and student outcome objectives (ASCA, 2019a).

Assess

The assess component requires the school counselor to evaluate their school counseling program to ensure their students are getting the best-needed services. This allows the school counselor to provide the students with improved services and determine the program's effectiveness. Particularly, the school counselor should self-evaluate their outlook and characteristics regarding their school counseling program with a qualified school administrator (ASCA, 2019a).

Moreover, the school counselor meets these main components by implementing direct and indirect services. Direct services consist of the school counselor having direct contact with the student. These services may consist of but are not limited to individual or group counseling, classroom instruction, and student advisement. In contrast, indirect services are provided by the school counselor regarding the student, which may include collaboration with families or school staff and consulting on a student's behalf. Apart from those services, one of the school counselor's responsibilities is to remove educational barriers and advocate for all students (Feldwisch & Whiston, 2015; Rust, 2019); hence, school counselors are vital to supporting change for Black girls. The Education Trust (2019) discovered that Black students were likely to seek support from their school counselors.

Specifically, the middle school counselor is essential to Black tween girls' school success. During this challenging developmental stage, tween girls experience a heightened need to belong, and peer interactions become the focus (Cappella et al., 2019). ASCA (2019b) emphasized that middle school counselors are integrated into the

whole educational curriculum and do not operate in isolation. They provide a comprehensive program that engages students and incorporates leadership, advocacy, and collaboration with school faculty, administration, and community/family members in implementing programs and activities to assist preadolescents in achieving success. Particularly, Brewington and Kushner (2020) noted that school counselors are tasked with fostering initiatives and programs to establish a supportive school environment.

The literature revealed that school counselors are significant contributors to student success, and group counseling programs are one of the most effective means of supporting students academically while also emphasizing personal development (Bostick & Anderson, 2009; Steen, 2011). Because positive peer engagement, social relationships, and behavioral tendencies have been related to preadolescents' school outlook, school counselors must address students' social and emotional development (Kwon et al., 2014). Harris et al. (2018) noted that to promote a healthy school experience, the school counselor should assume a leadership position to engage Black girls to become empowered.

Furthermore, several studies indicated the importance of the school counselor incorporating culturally appropriate programs and resources to build a healthy relationship with Black tween girls by establishing support systems (ASCA, 2022b; Aston et al., 2018; Beasley, 2019; Brookover et al., 2021; Fuller et al., 2018; Mayes et al., 2018). Additionally, Merlin (2017) stated that the school counselor could make an impact when implementing culturally empowering activities through schoolwide initiatives or small-group programs. Cheng et al. (2020) concluded that the school

counselor could profoundly impact Black tween girls' lives by implementing a small group counseling program that fosters their gender and racial identity, thus improving their overall school experience. This supported the need to explore school counselors' perspectives on an existing small-group program, DFT, regarding the needed improvements to provide school counselors with appropriate resources to assist their Black tween girls in school.

Tween Girls

The tween years (8–12 years of age) consist of a period of rapid physical and mental growth (Bulimwengu & Cartmel, 2022; Malekoff, 2014). Concerns, such as but not limited to peer pressure, risk taking, worries about oneself and body image, as well as the possibility of bullying and rising mental illness, all impact how they think and behave (Cappella et al., 2019; Geldard et al., 2016). Tween girls are further sensitive to biological changes from adolescent hormones (Steinberg, 2017). This may result in a developmental transition from seeing parents as significant figures in their lives to seeing peers as more significant, which may make it difficult for the developing tween to manage these new behaviors or make them confused and overwhelmed (Guyer et al., 2016). During these tween years, hormonal changes can also substantially impact the emergence of inappropriate behaviors in school.

This increase in inappropriate behaviors among tween girls may be magnified due to the transition to middle school. Research has acknowledged that when tween girls transition to middle school, it can be challenging (Green et al., 2021; Schietz & Villares, 2017). Several positive and negative elements influence the ability of tween girls to adapt

to middle school life. Students who successfully transition to middle school, for instance, feel accepted by their peers and included in the leading peer group (Coelho et al., 2017; Espelage et al., 2015). More specifically, three areas that can have a profound effect on the transition to the middle school environment for tween girls are relational conflict, positive interpersonal experiences, and a sense of belonging (Niehaus et al., 2012). Further, tween girls' relational aggression has been linked with unsuccessful outcomes academically and socially (Adamschick, 2010; James et al., 2011; Nakamoto & Schwartz, 2010).

Literature has indicated that Black girls have increased barriers during the tween years and middle school transition (Adamschick, 2010; Letendre & Rozas, 2015; Letendre & Smith, 2011). This shift requires Black girls to examine their identities as female members of racially and ethnically undervalued groups. Letendre and Rozas (2015) conducted four focus groups with Black middle school girls. Participants addressed how they were affected by and coped with stereotyped language and attitudes at school. The findings indicated that the participants used inappropriate behaviors to cope with adversity in the middle school environment. Further, the results indicated that when Black tween girls lack emotional support and feel overlooked in the school setting, they tend to establish their own ways to navigate their gender, racial, and emotional development (Joseph et al., 2016; Letendre & Rozas, 2015; Mathies et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, while the tween years may be a difficult time for all but specifically Black girls, this period may provide an opportunity to provide strategies to enhance their social and emotional skills to promote resilience and prevent future behavior issues in the

school setting (Duong & Bradshaw, 2017). Based on the literature, I found there was a need to help foster support systems for Black tween girls by exploring the school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the DFT programs to encourage healthy social development.

Small Group Programs

Small group programs have been known to be effective in meeting the numerous needs of students in the school setting. Research has indicated that school counselors have impacted students' emotional and social concerns through small group counseling programs (Beasley, 2019; Bonner et al., 2019; Bostick & Anderson, 2009; Fuller et al., 2018; Steen, 2011). According to ASCA (2020), small group counseling is a successful component of a school counseling program and a critical direct service for students. It positively impacts academic, professional, and social/emotional development, and school administration and districts should support this intervention. More specifically, small group counseling programs have helped with behavior concerns and enhanced positive peer relationships to create a sense of belonging in the school setting (ASCA, 2020). Students need to express themselves with their peers and the school counselor because the small group is established to foster an environment of trust, concern, and support. Small group counseling programs in schools are an essential component of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019a; Erford, 2019).

Small group counseling is a developmentally suitable method for working with preadolescents (Malekoff, 2014). The small-group program DFT was designed to assist school counselors with their tween girls' behavior concerns and teach coping skills for

them to be successful in the school environment (Poindexter, 2014). I have presented on the DFT program at numerous school counseling conferences locally and nationally and have received favorable evaluations regarding the curriculum and positive outlook towards DFT helping their tween girls' behavior. In addition, I established multiple DFT small groups in the local setting that assisted tween girls, which have all been Black girls. The DFT program evaluation from participants showed that over 95% benefited from participation; most importantly, they felt supported in the small group setting, which created a support system within the school (Poindexter, 2014). Research has noted that small group counseling programs have played a key role in Black girls' success in the school environment. According to Fuller et al. (2016), literature had reported that Black girls benefited from small group counseling programs. Additionally, Fuller et al.'s 2018 study highlighted that small-group programs could be useful in the development of Black girls, and a structured small group counseling method can effectively educate and establish empowerment among Black tween girls.

Notably, small group counseling programs with a culturally competent school counselor with the appropriate resources can significantly impact youth's lives (Cheng et al., 2020). Aston et al. (2018) examined the usefulness of a cultural empowerment 8-week small-group program for four Black middle school girls. The small group intervention significantly reduced negative behaviors among participants. These results provided more evidence in favor of including culturally oriented programs at the school level (Aston et al., 2018) to address the growing concerns about Black girls' behavior in

schools (Fuller et al., 2018; Graves et al., 2017; Hines & Wilmot, 2018; Ryan et al., 2016).

Black Girls' Discipline

Numerous research studies suggest that Black girls have increased discipline infraction rates than their overall school population representation (see Annamma et al., 2019; Hines & Wilmot, 2018; Kemp-Graham, 2018; Morris & Perry, 2017; Williams, 2017). Many quantitative research studies examined Black girls' behavior in schools (Aston et al., 2018; Bryant & Wilson, 2020; Caldera, 2018; Morris & Perry, 2017; Slate et al., 2016). Research indicated that problematic communication between students and adults complicates the issue of Black tween girls and discipline (Morris, 2016). Educators, school administrators, and other adults trying to improve student safety must recognize the importance of trauma and the conditions that influence Black girls' behavior, leading to others misinterpreting their actions as aggressive and dangerous when this is not the case (Morris, 2016).

Several qualitative studies explored Black girls' behavior and lived experiences (see Gibbs Grey & Harrison, 2020; Mayes et al., 2020; McPherson, 2020). The studies indicated the importance of understanding the unique perspectives of Black girls' experiences in schools. It is essential to note that tween years present enough traumatic stages for physical, social, and academic changes associated with maturity, let alone increased discipline (Naser & Denver, 2019). One of the main difficulties facing schools is developing healthy social and emotional skills in Black tween girls, which is necessary for academic and emotional success. Additionally, prior research indicates that not all

preteens are equally likely to face increased behavior infractions (Ramey, 2015; Skiba et al., 2014; Williams, 2017). Gender differences in students' punishment experiences are significant. Increased discipline infractions are caused by inequalities in tweens' social-emotional development, including disparities in rule conformity, attentiveness, self-regulation, aggression, and the capacity to get along with peers and teachers (Caramanis & Owens, 2020; Pinto et al., 2018).

Caldera's (2018) findings suggested that educators must focus on building rapport and fostering experiences that will establish support and addressing ways to improve discipline among Black girls. Brookover et al.'s (2021) phenomenological study explored the experiences of 11 girls and their school counselors. The study highlighted that school counselors are critical to managing the behavior of tweens, but there is a need for resources and multicultural training. Therefore, there was limited literature exploring the school counselors' perspectives on improving a small-group program for Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. This basic qualitative study sought to explore school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the DFT programs on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting.

Implications

This study can positively influence social change by providing school counselors with an improved culturally appropriate small-group program and strategies to help assist with Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. The recommendations of the DFT program could combat behavior and help school counselors establish a support system, build rapport, and meet the unique needs of their Black tween girls. According to Joseph

et al. (2016), “Black adolescent girls are an important group that is often overlooked in schools due to colorblind approaches and complexities of multiple, intersectional identities based on race and gender” (p. 5). Consequently, Black girls are left to deal with their concerns independently while these problems remain unseen, generalized, and ignored. Specifically, the literature noted that Black students benefited from the support of their school counselor to assist with these concerns (ASCA, 2019a).

The school counselor could make a substantial impact by establishing a small-group program to reduce social and emotional concerns among Black tween girls in schools. Moreover, Dolet and Salas (2021) indicated that creating a safe space for middle school Black girls is imperative. Creating a safe atmosphere for students’ academic, social, and emotional development is one of the essential roles of the school counselor. (Beasley, 2019). That safe space could be established with the school counselor implementing a small-group program for Black tween girls to feel empowered and learn strategies to assist with behavior. Therefore, there was a need to explore the school counselors’ perspectives in the successes, challenges, and needed improvements of the DFT programs for Black tween girls’ behavior in the school setting. The implication was that school counselors will have an improved small-group program to help decrease behavior infractions among their Black tween girls. As a result, their Black tween girls will emerge with improved social and emotional skills, decreased behavior infractions, and an established support system in the school environment.

Summary

In Section 1, I summarized the local problem of the increased discipline infractions among Black 6th-grade tween girls in JCS, which affects their school experience. Additionally, in Section 1, I summarized the purpose, which is to explore school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the DFT programs on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. The research question addressed the school counselors' perspectives on the aspects of the successes, challenges, and needed improvements of the DFT programs Black tween girls' behavior in schools. The literature review investigated the components of the role of the school counselor, tween girls' development, small-group programs, and Black girls' discipline. In Section 2, I provide the methodology and the research design and approach.

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the DFT programs on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. The basic qualitative research approach gives voice to participants' interpretations of their lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Qualitative research explores people's experiences in their natural environment (Baxter & Jack, 2015; Creswell, 2007; Glense, 2016). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is interpretive. Qualitative research develops findings based on the themes that emerge from the information gathered. Qualitative research begins with identifying a pattern or dilemma, and it is an exploratory method that allows a researcher to conclude from the data obtained. The qualitative analysis aims for a researcher to make sense of a situation and draw phenomena concerning the participants' meanings (Burkholder et al., 2020). Qualitative researchers acknowledge reflective thinking for readers to grasp their perspective on the studied topic.

Additionally, qualitative researchers indicated whether their positions directly impact the study's outcome (Maxwell, 2005). Therefore, a basic qualitative method was more conducive for this study instead of focusing mainly on statistics, numbers, and figures. The basic qualitative methodology is broader in scope (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kahlke, 2014) and uses broad questions, descriptors, and people's opinions (Burkholder et al., 2020; Kahlke, 2014; Percy et al., 2015). Specifically, the basic qualitative

methodology focuses on answering how and why questions (Barnham, 2015; Kahlke, 2014; Percy et al., 2015). In my search for a methodology, I considered the phenomenological design before choosing the basic qualitative approach. The phenomenological approach elicits in-depth interviewing to uncover deeper insights into a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finding strategies and best practices is the aim of basic qualitative design, but phenomenology does not require looking at such methods. Phenomenology examines how people make sense of a phenomenon by uncovering their lived experiences (Burkholder et al., 2020).

I also considered case studies. Case studies entail a thorough and in-depth examination of a specific occasion, circumstance, institution, or social group (Burkholder et al., 2020). Case studies use a variety of data points to give researchers the chance to describe the behaviors of a particular group (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Because I collected school counselors' perspectives on the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools, I determined that a collection of numerous data points, which is used in a case study, was not necessary to address the research questions of my study. As such, the basic qualitative research design approach is best suited for this study that explored the perspectives of the school counselors that determined patterns and themes needed to improve the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools.

Participants

Criteria and Justification

The process of selecting participants is an essential component of qualitative research. Burkholder et al. (2020) stated that qualitative studies are required to maintain a

standard of trustworthiness. The researcher must ensure the safety of all participants involved in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this section, I provided the methods used for identifying, selecting, and protecting participants in this study.

Sampling is a critical layer of the research process. Purposeful sampling entails the researcher identifying and selecting individuals with specialized knowledge or experience about a topic of interest (Babbie, 2016; Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011). According to Palinkas et al. (2015), purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research to obtain information-rich examples to better understand the concern. The approach for participant selection should be integrated into the overall logic of the study (Punch, 2004), and the rationale for sample selection should be aligned with the conceptual framework and research questions (Campbell et al., 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

In a qualitative study, a relatively small and purposefully chosen sample may be used to develop the level of understanding (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling is used to identify participants who are most likely to provide relevant and helpful information, and it is a method for discovering and selecting cases that will make the most efficient use of limited research resources (Palinkas et al., 2015). When purposefully sampling, the researcher should strive for adequate representation or similarity (Luciani et al., 2019). When a researcher seeks to find, comprehend, and gain insight, purposeful sampling is an appropriate method. Therefore, the researcher can select a sample that will provide the most knowledge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

A state department of education in the southeastern region granted me the data for my study's local problem, JCS. Additionally, I received permission to use this school

systems data when institutional review board (IRB) approval was granted. Subsequently, I intended to choose approximately 10-12 school counselors from JCS that have used the DFT program for Black tween girls in the school setting. But due to challenges with recruiting and the potential participants busy schedules, I opted for eight school counselors and data saturation was achieved. In addition, I am associated with JCS due to being a contracted school counseling employee for a neighboring school campus, but my relationship only exists in that capacity.

The publisher of the DFT program confirmed that 1,082 school counselors have or are currently using this program in their schools. As a result, the participants were purposefully selected due to their experience using the DFT program in schools. The sample size is undoubtedly essential when determining individuals for research (Boddy, 2016). The study's objectives are the driving force behind the project's design and, consequently, the sample size (Charmaz, 2014). According to Charmaz (2014), a small research project with "modest claims" (p. 114) may achieve saturation faster than a project that is seeking to describe a cross-disciplinary phenomenon. Ultimately the goal is to ensure that the data collected is rich and not the focus of sample size (Mason, 2010).

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

I obtained approval from Walden University and IRB (#11-23-22-0060025). After approval was received, I made contact through an email request to seek volunteers to participate in my study. Additionally, I was mindful to select specific participants who would yield an appropriate sample. This included emailing participants that have used the DFT program in schools individually and posting an official request for volunteers

through the approved local school system (JCS). All participants' personal information was kept confidential and protected during the entire research study.

Researcher–Participant Relationship

I sought the support of school counselors who used the DFT programs in schools for Black tween girls' behavior. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that qualitative researchers are highly involved in data collection and must deal with ethical difficulties arising from the researcher-participant relationship. In qualitative research, it is essential to establish a researcher-participant relationship (Bell et al., 2016). Establishing this rapport with the participants will assist the interviews in rendering genuine feedback (Creswell, 2015). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that a significant amount of time should be set aside for participants and researchers during the data collection process for a suitable qualitative study. To ensure a safe environment, I presented myself professionally, trusting, and nonjudgmentally (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In addition, I was mindful that I may have worked in the same school district as potential participants for this research study. Regarding ethical concerns, I do not work in the same local setting as any of the participants. The role of the researcher, instead of as a colleague, was made clear to research volunteers before their participation. Orb et al. (2001) noted that separating professional relationships may be challenging. However, being in the same profession, I encouraged mutual respect for their experiences while shared and reflected during the interview process.

Protection of Participants' Rights

A priority of this study was to lead research and collect data ethically to protect the research participants (see Apuke, 2017). Burkholder et al. (2020) stated that informed consent includes contacting potential research participants about their possible involvement in the study and noting their voluntary willingness to participate. I developed a consent form for the participants to review and required their signature to document that they willingly participate and fully understand the study's objectives and possible threats. Each potential participant was reminded that the information shared would be confidential, and efforts were made to prevent any possible risks that could occur from their participation. To safeguard the participants' identity, I used a numeric coding system and assigned each volunteer a pseudonym that was used when reporting the study's findings and analysis results. Using pseudonyms, such as SC1, SC2, and SC3, secured the confidentiality of each participant. The use of pseudonyms is consistent with a qualitative approach. Overall, assigning a pseudonym to each participant helped to ensure that their identity was protected. The participants and their associated pseudonyms are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Pseudonyms

Participant	Pseudonym
-------------	-----------

1	SC1
2	SC2
3	SC3
4	SC4
5	SC5
6	SC6
7	SC7
8	SC8

Each of the eight participants stated that they were willing and prepared to engage in the semistructured interviews that lasted for a period of 30 to 60 minutes. The demographic information of the participants is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Involved in DFT small-group counseling program	Length of time working in DFT program
SC1	F	30–39	Black	Yes	2 years
SC2	F	20–29	Black	Yes	4 years
SC3	F	30–39	Black	Yes	1 year
SC4	M	40–49	White	Yes	3 years
SC5	F	20–29	Black	Yes	4 years
SC6	F	30–39	White	Yes	5 years
SC7	M	30–39	Black	Yes	2 years
SC8	F	40–49	Hispanic	Yes	3 years

I conducted the start of each interview with an introduction of my project study and highlighted the study's purpose and significance. In addition, I allowed each participant to review the interview transcript and ask questions if needed. Participants were also reminded that they could withdraw from the study.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality was established to protect participants' privacy. When collecting data, the researcher should avoid interfering with the autonomy of the study participants or bringing up susceptible subjects during the research (Twining et al., 2017). By excluding any identifying information from published papers until an agreement to publish names is provided, the researcher upholds the rights of every participant. The researcher must attempt to guarantee the confidentiality of the study participants. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), removing identifying information, such as names and addresses, as soon as the data are examined is the best method to ensure that the people you have interviewed will not be embarrassed by the research. One way that I ensured confidentiality was using pseudonyms. Throughout the study, participants' identities were protected by using pseudonyms (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The pseudonyms maintained the promised privacy and identity of each participant.

Another way to maintain the participants' confidentiality is to store the data securely (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The hard copies of the data are locked in a secure off-site location. Online data was saved on a private hard drive and stored in a neutral environment away from the study sites. I sought the guidance of my chair/committee member if I needed further guidance.

Informed Consent

It is ethical to ensure that participants know their position in a study and have their consent before involving them. Informed consent is required for qualitative research whenever a researcher attempts to access locations or groups, collect inaccessible data, or

gather information through interviews and other methods (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The participants in the study reviewed and signed an informed consent, which consisted of complete details of the project study and their rights as participants. The participants clearly understood their role in the study, the risks that may occur, and the opportunity to withdraw from the study. The participants were informed of any data collection and analysis adjustments throughout the study. All data collected were stored in a secure neutral environment and will be disposed of after 5 years. Before data collection, I met with each participant to clarify any questions or concerns about the informed consent form.

Protection From Harm

It is essential to protect the participants from harm throughout the study. Examples may include coercion or pressure to engage in a study, whether deliberate or accidental, deceit or misleading the participants about the research, and acting in a way that makes the participants feel uncomfortable. Participants feel evaluated by verbal or physical cues, going over the time frame promised, disclosing information, disregarding their comfort, and having inaccurate thoughts (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Engaging with the participants during the entire study may prevent harm. This establishes that the participants feel safe from harm by providing complete details about the study, maintaining confidentiality, and clarifying that participants' feedback is precise.

I would have consulted, if needed, with the IRB staff and my chair regarding ethical decisions to promote the safety of participants and confirm the data collected is unbiased while securing the confidentiality and privacy of the participants. Additionally,

creating and maintaining rapport with the participant was vital and may have decreased participant harm. The beneficial interaction between myself and the participant may have been aided by reciprocity. The reciprocity process included creating relationships, trust, and showing individuals that you genuinely care about them (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Establishing trust may have helped the participants to feel comfortable in building a genuine relationship. Consistently building positive rapport with the research participants further helped to create reciprocity.

Data Collection

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the DFT programs on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. Open-ended qualitative interviewing was used to answer the research questions on the school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and needed improvements on the DFT program on Black tween girls in schools. According to Tracy (2019), an effective qualitative interview begins with "nondirective, open-ended questions to prompt the respondent in a nonthreatening manner to give them the power to respond freely" (p. 8). I interpreted and reflected on the participants' responses, which is why interviews were the most appropriate data collection method. While questionnaires and surveys may be used to collect data from individuals, they did not offer the opportunity for clarification of specific points during the process, if the need arises during the interview. An hour one-on-one semistructured interview gathered responses that accurately answer the research

questions while simultaneously exploring other responses to potentially garner data regarding their reflections on the DFT program.

Once I received Walden University IRB approval, I scheduled Zoom interviews and obtained informed consent from each participant. The interview questions were provided to the participants prior to the scheduled interview to gain comfort with the research process. For the collection of data to answer the research questions, I recruited eight participants. This was an appropriate number as it allowed me to easily conduct in-depth semistructured interviews. The semistructured interviews were conducted online through Zoom and lasted for a period of up to 60 minutes. The interviews used both semistructured and open-ended interview questions. The interview data was recorded with the use of the default Zoom voice recorder and a digital audio recorder which allowed me to record the online Zoom meetings. Even so, permission was first obtained from the participants before the recording. For backup, notes were taken with the use of paper and pen in each interview. This was important in case something happened to the digital audio recorder and all the digital data gets lost.

There were slight variations in data collection from the plan presented previously. While the plan was to interview 10 to 12 counselors, ultimately only eight were interviewed. Although this was a smaller sample size than was originally planned, it allowed me to reach data saturation. During the interview, an interview guide was used, and probing was done by asking follow-up questions. This was particularly appropriate for me to fully understand a given response, when the answers were ambiguous or vague,

and when I wanted to obtain more detailed or more specific information. No unusual circumstances were encountered when collecting data.

Description and Justification for Data Collection

A qualitative study's technique of inquiry must align with its objective, which identifies the research question (Saracho, 2017). Exploring school counselors' perspectives on the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools was vital to this study. Administering interviews allowed participants who have implemented the DFT program for Black tween girls the opportunity to reflect and share their experiences in a trusted space. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that qualitative research allows participants to genuinely describe their experiences on a particular matter. This was executed by ensuring that the participants were comfortable during the interview process.

Data Collection Instrument

Open-ended qualitative interviewing allows for an in-depth discussion of subjects, comprehension of processes, and determining potential reasons for observed patterns and themes (Weller et al., 2018). According to Roulston (2018), semistructured interviews with individuals or groups are frequently employed. These interviews typically last 30 to 60 minutes and entail the researcher presenting a list of questions they must answer based on their prior experiences and knowledge. Listening to the interviews provided a better understanding of the needed improvements for the DFT program to improve Black tween girls' behavior. I requested permission for each participant's interview to be recorded. Digital audio recorders were used to record each interview and used for transcribing. The

data collected was kept securely. After five years of the study being completed, the data will be destroyed.

Sufficiency of Data Collection

Individual interviews are sufficient for gathering data about school counselors' perspectives on the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools. Harrison et al. (2017) emphasized that interviews are the most significant sources of information in qualitative studies. Individual interviews allowed me to thoroughly explore the school counselors' perspectives on the DFT program, conducting eight interviews which justified the data collection for this study. The interview questions were a series of thoughtfully established questions that brought forth perspectives from individuals with school counseling knowledge and experiences utilizing the DFT program.

Processes for Data

Researchers must follow established, systematic protocols for data collection and analysis in order to ensure effectiveness when conducting a qualitative study (Saracho, 2017). This basic qualitative study explored the school counselors' perspectives of the DFT program on Black tween girls' behavior in the school environment. Data collection started once the school counselors that have used the DFT program had been confirmed. The established participants were communicated via email to schedule a convenient date and time for their interview. To better understand the needed improvements for the DFT program, I conducted open-ended semistructured interviews. This process was guided by an interview protocol that allowed the school counselors to share their authentic experiences with the DFT program.

In qualitative research, the open-ended interview approach allows the participants to provide as much specific information as they would like and also enables the researcher to ask follow-up questions (Turner & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022). This method allowed the participants to thoroughly express their reflections in as much depth as desired. The data was used to analyze patterns and themes from the interviews. Each participant was met individually before the start of the interview to review informed consent, confidentiality, the study's risks, and the right to discontinue participation at any time. Additionally, I explained the participant's role and the study's purpose, guided by the interview protocol. The participants were asked an established set of interview questions. The interviews were digitally recorded and lasted approximately 30-60 minutes.

Once the interviews were completed, the data was transcribed and analyzed. The findings were reviewed to identify similar patterns and phrases. I also implemented member checking to allow for inaccuracies to be discovered to ensure the validity of the study. Participants also got the opportunity to review the data to validate the researcher's interpretation of the accuracy of their interview.

Systems for Keeping Track of Data

While conducting qualitative research, the data collection process required a system to keep track of the data. According to Walden University's IRB (n.d.), it is the researcher's responsibility to maintain detailed records, which include documenting the recruitment, data collection, and other aspects of the data process. This required all data collected to be confidentially labeled and identified. DeVries et al. (2017) emphasized

that the establishment of a procedure for data management is complex, and a lack of a plan frequently hinders it. File naming is more critical than ever to document an explicit knowledge of the records (DeVries et al., 2017). I used a file naming system for this study to keep the data organized. There were eight participants, and each record was numbered specifically to the participants, starting with the number one.

In addition, quality control procedures were established to monitor the transcribed data. This was accomplished by comparing the transcribed interviews to the actual recording. I also created an obtainable timeline for this study's data collection and analysis. The timeline considered participant recruitment, data collection/organizing data, data analysis, and making necessary adjustments if needed. Lastly, participants' information was kept confidential by securely storing the data. The information was stored on my personal computer, which is password protected. All information was saved on my flash drive to be secured at home. Hard copies of data were labeled and secured in a filing cabinet and will be destroyed after five years.

Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants

During the research process, it was vital to consider how to gain access to participants. Access is defined as obtaining authorization to enter an organization to conduct research and develop connections to gain access to individuals and information inside the organization (Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016). Cunliffe and Alcadipani (2016) noted that the research must acknowledge specific considerations when gaining access to participants. The school system must approve you using their data and contacting their employees. I gained approval from the JCS superintendent to conduct research. This

information was communicated with the participants to build rapport and gain insight. Initial contact with participants was critical to setting the tone for participation and the duration of the study. I provided a clear understanding of my objectives and goals for the study. However, I was aware that building trust among research participants may be challenging and considered a transactional relationship. The transactional relationship involves give-and-take, trade-offs, and compromise to reach an agreement on results that will be advantageous to both the researcher and the gatekeeper (Cunliffe & Alcadipani, 2016). Therefore, it was essential to be authentic and honest with the participants and to know your role as the researcher, even if it had changed the findings.

Role of the Researcher

Trowler (2011) noted that researchers should avoid conducting research where they are employed because this can cause a dilemma for the participant to provide a genuine description of the context that may help the study's methodology. It was essential for me, as the researcher, to establish trustworthiness with the participants. Additionally, as a former colleague of some participants, I have existing professional connections due to being in the school counseling field. However, I have never worked in the same school settings as the participants. I do not believe my prior connections with the participants hindered the validity of the study's findings.

In addition, I am aware that I have a professional interest in the study topic due to the DFT program being my publication. Acknowledging my biases and beliefs about the DFT program throughout the entire research process ensured that the data collection process was as accurate as possible. I remained impartial throughout the interview and in

my reflective journal. I was mindful to avoid implying my beliefs in the interview and follow-up questions and refrained from making any comments on the participants' responses. Throughout the interview process, to ensure neutrality, I asked a nonparticipating school counselor to examine my data for any biases.

Data Analysis

Creswell and Creswell (2017) stated that analyzing qualitative data involves knowing how to interpret the data in order to answer the study's research questions. The data analysis of this basic qualitative research study included reviewing the transcripts, using the open coding process, and thematic analysis for the findings. Thematic analysis is described as "an umbrella term, designating sometimes quite different approaches aimed at identifying patterns across qualitative datasets" (Braun et al., 2019, p. 844). According to Lester et al. (2020), steps must be taken to implement a thematic analysis. This may include preparing and organizing the data, transcribing the data, becoming familiar with the data, coding the data, moving from codes to categories and categories to themes, and making the analytic process transparent. For this qualitative project study, I highlighted the steps that took place for data analysis.

Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that the researcher should examine the transcripts several times to become familiar with them during the data collecting period, extract key phrases, and develop implications and themes to explain the study comprehensively. The researcher should prepare and organize the data collected (Lester et al., 2020). I read the interview transcripts thoroughly and labeled each participant's interview. In addition, I sent a summary of the interview to each potential participant to see if any clarifications

should be made. It is emphasized that data should be verified with research participants (Creswell, 2015).

After verifying the interviews, I started transcribing and becoming familiar with the data. Lester et al. (2020) suggested that this step involves the researcher taking notes of the concepts or ideas that emerged from the interviews (Creswell, 2015) while reflecting on the aim of the study. This included notes from my personal reflective journal. This journal helped to document and highlight thoughts that were of importance during the interviews. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that reflective journaling promotes self-reflection, cultivates healthy research habits, creates new plans and initiatives for social change, and improves other aspects of a researcher's abilities to establish trustworthiness.

The next essential step in the data analysis process was coding the data and determining categories and themes. Following the transcript process, I identified significant phrases which were used to generate codes using an open coding process. After the open coding process, the codes were established. Saldaña (2016) stated, "A code is a word or phrase describing some segment of your data" (p. 1). The codes were used to create themes; this helped to bring a more profound understanding of the study's research questions. The thematic analysis emphasizes the discovery and justification of research concepts in the data. (Tracy, 2019).

I systematically coded key features of the data across the data set, collating relevant data to each code. The codes captured additional specifics than themes and indicated the context of the conversation. After the total of response excerpts were

established, 23 codes were assigned. Table 3 indicates the initial codes and the number of responses assigned to each code frequency.

Table 3

Initial Code Frequencies

Initial code	Code frequency in interviews
Attendance a challenge	8
Became friends and started helping each other to stay out of drama	2
Communicate better	8
Dramatic behaviors calmed down	10
Extend program to outside of school environment and include boys	3
Finding the time to pull girls from the class a challenge	7
Girls became less reactive and less combative, and learned how to cope	12
Girls will benefit from activities on how to handle conflicts arising from social media	8
Girls worked well together and got along better	7
Having the girls buy into the program	8
Improved grades	3
Include impact of social media into the program	5
Learned ways of dealing with problems	10
Level of confidence increased	4
Level of respect increased	3
More open to listening to others	2
Parents to continue program outside of school	2
Poor attendance and having the girls buy into the program as some girls were reluctant to participate	9
Reluctant to participate	4
Take the program to the church	4
Tight schedule a challenge	4
Update the DFT material	8
Update the DFT technology	8

The final data analysis step included the thematic analysis process. The data was then synthesized to create a composite synthesis of data gathered regarding the research questions. In the final step, a report was generated. As a preliminary overview of the results, Table 4 indicates how the initial codes were grouped into the finalized themes. This final analysis stage presents in detail the overall themes to describe the school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the DFT programs on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. The findings informed the project, white paper, that was developed for this study.

Table 4

Grouping of Codes into Finalized Themes

Theme	Theme frequency in interviews
Initial code clustered to identify theme	
Theme 1: Dramatic behavior in the girls reduced as they became less reactive and more respectful	29
Dramatic behaviors calmed down	
Level of confidence increased	
Level of respect increased	
Girls became less reactive and less combative and learned how to cope	
Theme 2: Girls learned ways of dealing with problems and stay out of problem, and got along better with each other	19
Became friends and started helping each other to stay out of drama	
Girls worked well together and got along better	
Learned ways of dealing with problems	
Theme 3: Girls now communicate better and have improved grades	13
Communicate better	
Improved grades	
More open to listening to others	
Theme 4: Finding the time to implement the program	11
Tight schedule a challenge	

Finding the time to pull girls from the class a challenge	
Theme 5: Poor attendance and having the girls buy into the program as some girls were reluctant to participate	20
Attendance a challenge	
Reluctant to participate	
Having the girls buy into the program	
Theme 6: Extend DFT program to outside of school environment	9
Parents to continue the program outside of school	
Take the program to the church	
Extend program to outside of school environment and include boys	
Theme 7: Include activities on how to address conflicts arising through social media	13
Include impact of social media into the program	
Girls will benefit from activities on how to handle conflicts arising from social media	
Theme 8: Update DFT program material and the technology	16
Update the DFT material	
Update the DFT technology	

Evidence of Quality

The quality of the study was ensured through validity and reliability. The research provides evidence of quality when a researcher looks for a complex design and offers genuine interpretations and findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). There are numerous ways to conduct qualitative research, Crossman (2017) suggested that most researchers should implement at least two methods. Within this study, I incorporated member checking and debriefing. Member checks are a validation technique. By checking in with participants to inquire about the accuracy of interpretations, members of the group confirm validity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In my study, I asked participants to review the interview transcripts to ensure their perspectives were accurately reflected. The participants were

asked to acknowledge any discrepancies, misinterpretations, or other findings reflected during their interview. If any inaccuracies were acknowledged, I made the necessary corrections to precisely note the results.

I also included debriefing to eliminate potential biases in my study. Peer debriefing consists of a collaboration between me and one or more peers who have unbiased opinions about the study (McMahon & Winch, 2018). Throughout the data collection process, I recruited a school counselor not associated with the study to review the findings to determine if any biases occurred and make the necessary changes. Lastly, an audit trail was established to document all the steps that were taken to complete this research project successfully from the beginning until the findings were reported. By following it, other researchers could obtain the same results. Therefore, reliability was established.

Procedures for Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases involve when the evidence does not fit into a pattern or comprehension of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The more the researcher challenges and queries the explanations, the more complex the interpretations will become. To avoid discrepant cases, I thoroughly looked for contradictory data that may have hindered the validity of the project study. Yin (2017) noted that finding inconsistencies in the data enhances the study. However, the data analysis didn't uncover any discrepant cases.

Data Analysis Results

The problem addressed by this study was that there was an increase in discipline infractions during the 2016–2017, 2017–2018, 2018–2019, and 2019–2020 school years

among Black six-grade tween girls in Jefferson County Schools (JCS). The numbers revealed a 44% increase in discipline infractions over a 4-year period (ALSDE, 2022). According to several local school counselors in JCS, there has been an increase in discipline concerns among their Black tween girls. There were limited resources that uniquely met the current needs of behavior concerns for their Black tween girls (ASCA, 2020; Cheng et al., 2020). The DFT program is a small-group program designed to assist school counselors with their tweens' inappropriate behavior and assist with success in the school setting. Despite using the DFT programs, the discipline infractions have increased for Black tween girls from 2016-2020. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the DFT program on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. The study sought to answer three research questions. These are as follows:

RQ1: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the successes of the Drama-Free Tweens program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?

RQ2: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the challenges of the Drama-Free Tweens program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?

RQ3: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the Drama-Free Tweens program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?

Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

Thematic analysis was used to move inductively from coded units to larger representations including categories and themes, with the use of NVivo 12 software. The process involved several steps as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). First was

familiarization of the collected data. This was achieved by reviewing the transcript from each study subject individually. Phrases, paragraphs, and sentences that were found to be meaningful to the topic were highlighted. The highlighted data were then reviewed afterwards in order to establish whether or not it could help answer the research questions. Data that had been highlighted but was then found to be unrelated to the research questions were removed and stored in a separate file.

The second step was about generating initial codes or development of codes. Braun and Clarke (2006) pointed out that after the researcher has familiarized himself or herself with the data, he or she then starts to identify preliminary codes, which are the features of the data that appeared critical. I generated initial codes during this phase. I also systematically coded meaningful features of the data across the data set, collating data that was relevant to each code. The codes were significantly more specific than themes and provided an indication of the context of the conversation. Overall, several codes emerged from the data.

In the third step, themes were developed. Groups were formed from codes that were similar. These groups formed the themes that were used to answer the three research questions. Data that were related or were connected in one way or another were clustered together. Each group was labeled with the use of a statement or phrase describing every distinct pattern. Revision of themes was the fourth step. As patterns began emerging in the data, data that were related to a particular pattern were identified. The data from the clusters created previously were placed to establish relations or patterns. To explain the pattern, direct quotes from the data/transcribed interviews, were used.

The fifth step involved finalization and definition of themes. I looked for the emergence of overarching themes in the patterns. Related patterns were combined and clustered into themes. After identifying themes that were more meaningful, an identifying abstract descriptor was assigned. After analyzing all the data, the themes were arranged in a matrix with their corresponding supportive patterns and codes for each data cluster. The data was then synthesized to create a composite synthesis of data gathered regarding the research questions. In the final step, a report was generated. There were no discrepant cases.

Results for the RQs

The project study sought to explore the school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the DFT programs on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. In total, eight themes emerged from the data. The results of the data analysis were organized by the research questions. The themes are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Research Questions and Their Corresponding Themes

Research question	Themes used to address the research question
RQ1: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the successes of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?	Theme 1: Dramatic behavior in the girls decreased as they became less reactive and more respectful Theme 2: Girls learned ways of dealing with problems, stayed out of trouble, and got along better with each other Theme 3: Girls now communicate better and have improved grades

RQ2: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the challenges of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?	Theme 4: Finding the time to implement the program Theme 5: Poor attendance and having the girls buy into the program as some girls were reluctant to participate
RQ3: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?	Theme 6: Extend DFT program to outside of school environment Theme 7: Include activities on how to address conflicts arising through social media Theme 8: Update DFT program material and the technology

Research Question 1

For this study, the first research question was as follows: *What are the school counselors' perspectives on the successes of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?* Three themes emerged from the data that helped to answer this question. These are: (a) Theme 1: Dramatic behavior in the girls decreased as they became less reactive and more respectful, (b) Theme 2: Girls learned ways of dealing with problems, stayed out of trouble, and got along better with each other, and (c) Theme 3: Girls now communicate better and have improved grades. The table below illustrates the number of participants who mentioned each theme.

Theme	<i>n</i> of participants contributing to this theme (<i>N</i> = 8)	<i>n</i> of references to this theme in the data
Theme 1: Dramatic behavior in the girls decreased as they became less reactive and more respectful	7	15
Theme 2: Girls learned ways of dealing with problems, stayed out of trouble, and got along better with each other	8	15
Theme 3: Girls now communicate better and have improved grades	6	9

Table 6*Research Question 1 Themes****Theme 1: Dramatic Behavior in the Girls Decreased as They Became Less Reactive and More Respectful***

As per this theme, the school counselors felt that one of the successes of the DFT program is that it led to a reduction in dramatic behavior in the girls since the girls became more respectful and less reactive. This was mentioned by seven participants 15 times. SC1 mentioned that:

One would be, I would say, the level of respect for self, adults, and not just the girls that were in that group, but just girls in the school building. I noticed that the girls responded differently about how they saw themselves, how they saw others.

Similarly, SC2 indicated that:

It did appear that some of the dramatic behaviors had calmed down some. For instance, one of the activities discussing positive versus negative attention, that activity really helped them to understand that all attention is not good attention. I think that activity was a really good turning point.

Likewise, SC3 mentioned that “It helped me tremendously. My referrals went down. Kids were not sent to ISS as much.” SC6 stated that the girls “appeared to have more respect for themselves by not acting out.” Moreover, S7 noted that:

Well, I feel like overall they left more confident and a little less combative. And I think that was probably the point of the group. Well, I think you can take that group and see how it fits into what you need for your girls. But for our girls, that’s

what really needed. We needed them to be a little bit less combative. We needed them to be a little bit more willing to listen and process and not react emotionally, and then everybody left a lot more confident.

SC8 pointed out that, “they started to be less reactive and more proactive when handling conflict.” She added that:

There’re many successes. There were two tween girls that stood out for me. Those girls had the most behavior issues with teachers and classmates. It was literally always something. I remember one young lady was getting in trouble almost every week. It was always something, her hitting someone or saying something inappropriate to a teacher. However, after a small group, her behavior changed drastically. All the teachers couldn’t believe that was the same child, literally. She was just different. She was buying into the program and started to understand that her behavior really impacted her success in school. The other young lady, I think was acting out because she lacked confidence and didn’t have many friends. I slowly started to see how to create friendship and being happy more instead of creating issues by being dramatic.

The participants highlighted that the DFT program allowed the group members to understand the importance of being proactive, not reactive, in school. They expressed that the program gave the Black tween girls a better understanding of their dramatic behaviors directly impacting their success in the school environment. The participants also shared that the program provided a safe space to learn strategies from the DFT program curriculum that enforced decision-making skills, improved behavior, and respect toward

others. An activity that was mentioned was the positive versus negative attention lesson. This lesson allowed the girls to discuss different scenarios that would bring either positive or negative attention to themselves. The participant noted that this activity brought awareness to the group members to understand that all attention is not always positive. The participants were pleased to see the group members' increased level of self-awareness after being in the DFT program.

Theme 2: Girls Learned Ways of Dealing with Problems, Stayed Out of Trouble, and Got Along Better With Each Other

This theme suggests that the school counselors also feel that as a result of the implementation DFT program, the girls who participated in it learned ways of dealing with problems and stay out of problem and got along better with each other. This was mentioned by all the eight participants, 15 times. SC1 stated that the girls, “Worked very well together in a small group setting. It was great change.” She added that:

It was obvious that, again, that the girls just truly enjoyed it and they enjoyed each other and really tried to understand each other’s perspective on drama, and how they even got to the point that they were referred for the small group, depending on circumstances in their personal lives, things that they may have seen, but it made a difference.

Moreover, SC3 stated that:

They knew how to talk about the problem before becoming drama-free teens, as you can say. So they talked about it, they learned ways of dealing with problems, so that helped them out a whole lot and helped them to stay out of trouble.

According to SC4, “it appeared that they had a new level of confidence and tried to solve problems before they were reactive and got in trouble.” SC5 mentioned that:

And as they engaged more in groups, what I learned is that they would take bits and pieces of the lessons that was taught, maybe one thing, and they’ll joke about it a little bit when they’re having some drama going on...And what I noticed that I would see a positive, more of a positive outcome, whereas maybe they would be more impulsive in their reaction to some drama that was happening. They would take some of the things that they learned in group and apply it. And so that was something that I saw.

Moreover, SC6 stated that, “So as a whole, the girls all improved a certain aspect of their behavior. The girls that bought more into their sessions had substantial improvements.

They got along better with their classmates.” Additionally, SC6 reported that:

Most of the girls were reactive before the group. For example, if they had a conflict, it wasn’t a shock for them to get loud or become impulsive, but after participating in the group, the girls were more proactive about how to handle conflicts. Actually, they would tell me stories about how they responded appropriately instead of how they would’ve normally responded. So, I think they really learned how to improve their behavior in the school environment from our group sessions.

SC6 further stated that, “Also, I noticed they would come speak with me more before a conflict would get out of control, which I’m grateful for. So, they learned how to cope,

and in that process improved their behavior among classmates and teachers.” She added that:

I would say the girls in the group built a strong support and rapport with each other, especially after a few sessions. It seemed that they had their own little group of girls that understood some of the same challenges they dealt with and could share in a trusted environment. So, I would say the rapport was built tremendously.

SC8 indicated that, “Also, a big concern was with their classmates, so I noticed they had better peer relationships with their classmates as well.”

Participants reflected that the DFT program empowered the Black tween girls to build self-confidence. It was expressed that some of the girls may have lacked confidence or friendships and participating in the program established new rapport and support systems to combat that issue. The group participants would often come to the school counselors to work through peer relational concerns instead of reacting dramatically and getting in trouble. The participants reflected that the group members established a connection with each other by understanding some of the same challenges that they faced at school. By participating in the group, the Black tween girls started to encourage each other's success in school.

Theme 3: Girls Now Communicate Better and Have Improved Grades

This theme demonstrates that the school counselors believe that the girls are now able to communicate better and have improved grades because of their participation in

the program. This was mentioned by six of the eight participants, nine times. SC1 pointed out that one girl was, “open to listening to other girls’ opinions.” SC2 reported that:

Well, for my girls, it started to calm down the drama some and even became close friends. They would help each other; help remind each other that what was learned during the group and to stay out of drama. Their grades really improved because of this.

SC3 stated that:

Also, in this program that I really and truly like is that it allowed them not only to be able to communicate between each other, but also with adults, teachers, parents, principal, myself, the counselor. So, it helped them to be able to communicate and tell what they’re feeling and how they feel...I saw also that these were smart individuals. The grades came up. That grades came up.

Moreover, SC3 added that:

And the best part is they learn how to communicate with their parents. And that was a good one because the parents was like, “I thank you for opening my child up, giving them avenues to be able to talk to me about what’s going on.”

SC4 mentioned that, “I noticed that the girls were building better rapport with me as their counselor.”

The themes that emerged with RQ1 revealed that the support of the school counselor may significantly impact Black tween girls’ school experience by implementing a small group counseling program that fosters their overall success (Cheng et al., 2020). This speaks to Skinner’s (1953) behaviorism theory, which highlights that

environmental circumstances affect behavior by changing rewards or consequences; undesirable tendencies may disappear while positive behaviors remain and become stronger (Dastpak et al., 2017). Furthermore, when the DFT program was established, it allowed the school counselor to build rapport and foster trusted relationships with their Black tween girls thus helping to improve inappropriate behaviors.

Research Question 2

The second research question was as follows: *What are the school counselors' perspectives on the challenges of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?* Two themes emerged from the data in response to this question. These are: (a) Theme 4: Finding the time to implement the program, and (b) Theme 5: Poor attendance and having the girls buy into the program as some girls were reluctant to participate. The table below illustrates the number of participants who mentioned each theme.

Table 7

Research Question 2 Themes

Theme	<i>n</i> of participants contributing to this theme (<i>N</i> = 8)	<i>n</i> of references to this theme in the data
Theme 4: Finding the time to implement the program	6	7
Theme 5: Poor attendance and having the girls buy into the program as some girls were reluctant to participate	6	9

Theme 4: Finding the Time to Implement the Program

As per this theme, the school counselors feel that one of the challenges of the DFT program is finding the time to implement it. This was mentioned by six participants, seven times. SC1 stated that:

For me personally, as I stated earlier, as long as I was consistent and in a school, it's not very flexible. You're on a very tight schedule as a school counselor. Crisis can happen at any point. So, I may have had a small group scheduled with the girls at 1:30 on a Thursday, and it did happen. And so the next week I was trying to play catch up for the students.

SC2 stated that, "Some of the teachers didn't want the girls leaving class, so I would say finding the best time to pull the girls." SC3 reported that:

I think the biggest challenge is time. And the reason why I say time is because of the fact that this program was implemented during school time and you did not want to take the kids out of academic classes. You didn't want to take them out of PE all the time, or there are other resources. So with me personally, I would love to see the program go outside of the school, which would be best. That way you have more time with them and they won't miss class.

Similarly, SC4 mentioned that, "I would say just finding the time for group and attendance was the main challenge." Likewise, SC5 indicated that, "So another challenge that I found with this, having time to implement the program pretty much." SC8 pointed out that:

I guess there weren't a ton of challenges once the girls finally got started and everyone started building rapport with each other. However, it was so difficult to fit in our small groups because the school schedule always had something to pop up. For instance, it could be a school event, an emergency that needed my help. It would pull my time away from my groups. That appeared to be the most challenging... The time to have group and all the girls did in attendance on days we would meet.

Participants discussed being consistently frustrated with the lack of time to implement the DFT program for various reasons. School counselors have been known to have numerous roles throughout the day, such as handling student conflict, scheduling, conducting classroom guidance, or speaking with individual students, to name a few (Savitz-Romer et al., 2021). Therefore, it was no surprise that the participants expressed that the lack of time to implement the DFT program was a challenge, especially considering taking time away from their academic classes.

Theme 5: Poor Attendance and Having the Girls Buy into the Program as Some Girls Were Reluctant to Participate

This theme suggests that the school counselors feel that poor attendance and having girls buy into the program are other challenges of the DFT program. This was mentioned by six participants, nine times. SC1 stated that:

Also, any other challenges would just be the girls themselves, depending on the day, depending on what they encountered or experience that day, they may have participated fully or they may have not. However, I had to go in excited if the

other girls are excited, then that would sometimes change the trajectory of things and those girls would get involved. I would say mostly that was a challenge.

SC2 reported that, “Also, attendance was a big concern.” Talking about the challenges faced, SC4 noted that “Thinking maybe it would be just getting all the girls to present to attend the groups.” SC4 also spoke of, “poor attendance day for the girls” and added that “attendance was (among) the main challenges.” SC5 mentioned that:

Well, I will say when we first started out, as I guess to be expected, they were a little bit reluctant to engage, kind of trying to figure out what this program was, why are we doing this? Is this is going to even work? Does this apply to me? I think initially it’s just the buy-in part of it. And I don’t know if that’s more the program or just you have to have the rapport because when they’re teenagers, they’re going through an awkward phase. They want to make sure...

Moreover, SC6 stated that:

I guess I would say initially some of the main challenges were the girls actually buying into the program. At first, they were a little reluctant to share in the group with some of the other girls because they were all divas, of course. But I would say once they understood the program and built rapport with each other, it was amazing to see the group really transition.

Furthermore, SC6 reported that:

Also, consistency of the group was a huge challenge. It never failed that things would come up in my schedule that prevented me from having our group, or some or one of my girls would miss due to absence. That really would throw a wrench

in my progress because attendance of the girls played such a major role with them getting the material and moving forward.

Similarly, SC8 indicated that, “In all honestly, it took some time. The girls that participated had to get comfortable and buy into the small-group program.”

RQ2 revealed the themes regarding the school counselor having the time to implement the DFT program among their many responsibilities during the school day. Additionally, the participants’ buy into the program initially was a challenge. Parzych et al.’s (2019) study ultimately indicated improvement in students’ success when more school counselors are available. The literature suggested that school counselors can successfully deliver a comprehensive school counseling curriculum to effectively assist students’ academic, career, and, specifically, emotional/social concerns. Therefore, this challenge could be managed if more school counselors were available in the school to have time to implement the DFT program. According to Skinner’s (1968) viewpoint, learning occurs when students’ unfavorable habits are changed. Students must regularly engage in the desired behavior in order to change their negative conduct.

Research Question 3

For this study, the third research question was as follows: *What are the school counselors’ perspectives on the needed improvements of the DFT program for Black tween girls’ behavior in schools?* Three themes emerged from the data that help to answer this question. These are: (a) Theme 6: Extend DFT program to outside of school environment, (b) Theme 7: Include activities on how to address conflicts arising through

social media, and (c) Theme 8: Update DFT program material and the technology. Table 2 shows the number of participants who mentioned each theme.

Table 8

Research Question 3 Themes

Theme 6: Extend DFT Program to Outside of School Environment

Theme	<i>n</i> of participants contributing to this theme (<i>N</i> = 8)	<i>n</i> of references to this theme in the data
Theme 6: Extend DFT program to outside of school environment	3	4
Theme 7: Include activities on how to address conflicts arising through social media	6	10
Theme 8: Update DFT program material and the technology	6	6

As per this theme, the school counselors feel that one of the needed improvements regarding the DFT program is to extend it to outside of the school environment. This was mentioned by nearly half of the interviewed participants, and they mentioned it four times. SC1 stated that:

Also, maybe just some suggestions on other resources. And I know you're asking for resources, but maybe some suggestions on, I guess, services that parents could continue outside of small group away from the book that would benefit the students.

SC3 mentioned that:

We need to take it to our church because that's mostly where everything really and truly starts. Not only that, we can do churches, we can do different organizations. I'm a member of Delta Sigma Theta. I got friends who are AKAs

and just making sure that we getting the program out there so that our kids, being an African American and myself, know how to solve problems and communicate and love myself.

Likewise, SC6 stated that:

I really think the program had all the necessary resources. I mean, I would love to see this program for other students, like boys or extended outside of the school environment. This age group of tweens needs an abundance of guidance due to the critical stage they're going through. So additional materials that would serve tweens even outside the school setting I think would be awesome.

The participants discussed that the DFT program could improve if it was extended outside of the school setting to reach more students and include boys in the program. It was also mentioned that the DFT program would be helpful in a church environment. Participants stated that the need for Black tween girls to have support outside of school is essential because when they leave school, support may waver. Mentorship has been suggested to provide support outside of the school environment to cultivate empowerment of self and success for Black tween girls (Brinkman et al., 2018; Harper et al., 2021). The school counselors noted that mentorship would be helpful in providing the support that is needed outside of school hours.

Theme 7: Include Activities on How to Address Conflicts Arising Through Social

Media

This theme suggests that another needed improvement according to the school counselors is to include activities on how to address conflicts arising through social

media. This was mentioned by six participants, 10 times. SC2 stated that:

I think my girls will benefit from activities that address how to deal with conflicts that arrive with social media. Social media also consumes my tween girls, and that's where most of the drama comes in from my school.

Moreover, SC4 mentioned that "more activities on social media would be helpful for my current tween girls. I would love to see the program extend to possible maybe tween boys and more activities for the tween girls to help them deal with social media." Furthermore, SC5 reported that:

So when I think about now and how the world has changed so much, I think about the impact of social media and what it's having. It's a huge thing right now. And so I think I would like to see more of that included in this program, more than... And what I noticed with the program also is that it's...

Besides, SC6 spoke about "a guide to hit on other topics such as social media related to their development." She added that:

Currently, all of my tween girls are exposed to or have the accessibility to social media. It's crazy how much conflict comes from there. It literally spills over into many layers of the school setting, and we have to try to put out those fires.

Similarly, SC7 noted that:

Well, maybe also some social media plugging. I don't know about TikTok, and I try to stay away from all that because honestly, I'm going to be honest, nah, I'll get on professional groups for Facebook. But in some professional groups. But then there are younger counselors who might enjoy a little TikTok video about it,

which connects to Facebook via a Reel or something. On Snapchat or whatever to get another generation using it. Have you heard that before?

In addition, SC8 reported that:

Okay. The girls, they truly enjoy the activities in the group. I guess if I had to pick something, it would be the most of the activities focused on self-reflection, which was very helpful, but with the technology and access to media, it would help if there was more activities on navigating being a tween and dealing with social media and the pressures attached to tween development. They would really benefit with help with understanding reality and fantasies regarding the media.

The school counselors expressed the prevalence of social media conflicts while working with their Black tween girls, and the DFT program activities were limited regarding social media. The participants discussed wanting more activities that assisted the girls with navigating the increased pressure related to social media and strategies to ensure safety while on social media platforms. They mentioned that their students spend abundant time communicating with friends and seeing different imagery on social media. School counselors reflected that there is a need to encourage healthy ways to communicate online and understand the possible illusions in social media compared to real life. According to Brar (2022), tween girls must have a support system as they navigate their lives online to ensure their offline success.

Theme 8: Update Drama Free Program Material and the Technology

Moreover, the school counselors feel that the technology and program material of the DFT program should be updated. This was mentioned six times by six participants.

SC1 stated that:

I would say maybe just updating some of the material. I know that the book came with the CD for a lot of visuals, and we know that now a lot of the technology, the devices don't have a CD-ROM. Maybe even going out and surveying African American girls and counselors and social workers and mentors that has any type of involvement with girls to just get their input on how it can be improved. So just relevant and maybe some updating.

Furthermore, SC2 mentioned that "I think the program would be helpful with updating the technology for the hands out, possibly including a link for the hands out instead of a CD ROM, but otherwise just extending the program to provide more activities."

Moreover, SC4 noted that:

I would say that overall I enjoyed the small-group program, but if I had to improve anything, it would be to replace the CD-ROM that has the handouts. Most computers don't have a CD-ROM included anymore. Also, more activities on social media would be helpful for my current tween girls.

In addition, SC5 reported that:

And another thing that I noticed with, I guess, the program is definitely geared towards self, which is really, really good because a lot of the drama that we have around us kind of come from the drama within us. And so I see that, but maybe

even some more stuff geared toward how we relate to others and empathy and some of those things to be included in the program. I think that would be really good for our teens to learn that.

Furthermore, SC6 stated that, “That’s a tough one because I really did enjoy most of the activities and the girls related to the material. So I would say maybe some updated materials.” Likewise, SC8 indicated that:

If I had to think of the additional resources that would be helpful, I would say to have a different way to get the handouts for the lessons. I remember it was somewhat an inconvenience to find a computer that the ability to print the handouts from the CDs. It wasn’t really that big of a deal, but would help if it was an easier way to access them.

The emerging themes with RQ3 supported the need to extend the support of the DFT program outside the school environment with additional mentorship and more material to assist with social media concerns among their Black tween girls. School counselors are in a unique role to offer advice and assistance to students and staff to reduce social media conflict (Kull et al., 2019; Swank et al., 2018). Despite the enormous incidence and impact of both social media issues, school counselors frequently lack the training and resources to provide for their students (Tinstman Jones et al., 2019).

Moreover, the behaviorism theory aligned with the need to analyze student behavior and change it using the environment so that the student may operate more fully in the classroom, and behavior modification needs the systematic application of learning principles (Martin & Pear, 2003). School counselors may learn ways to assist behavior in

promoting learning and success by recognizing the environmental aspects that influence student behavior and organizing the environment in response (Kaplan, 1995). The needed improvements of the DFT program may help the school counselors have a guide to combating conflicts concerning social media and ways to enrich Black Tween girls' success outside of the school setting with mentorship.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the *Drama-Free Tweens* program on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. In Section 2, I summarized the methodology that was used for this qualitative project study, detailing the research and design approach. Additionally, in Section 2, I outlined the criteria regarding participants, including criteria and justification, procedures for gaining access to participants, and research and participant interaction. The data collection section addressed the measures that were taken to ensure the protection of data and potential research participants from possible harm. The role of the researcher section investigated the components of acknowledging possible biases and the importance of creating genuine rapport with potential participants.

Lastly, the data analysis results neutrally and objectively outlined the findings of the research study that was conducted. It presented data with the use of a clear text narrative that was supported by tables. It covered the following sections: (a) data analysis, (b) patterns, relationships, and themes, (c) results of the RQs, (d) summary, and lastly (e) outcome of findings. The findings are organized by the research questions. It

sought to address three research questions and show alignment with Skinner's behaviorism theory. Data was analyzed through thematic analysis. Six steps of analysis were followed as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The six steps are familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and lastly reporting. NVivo 12 software aided in the analysis process. The first research question was: *What are the school counselors' perspectives on the successes of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?* The findings revealed that according to the school counselors, the successes of the DFT program include reduction in dramatic behavior in girls as they became less reactive and more respectful, the girls learned ways of dealing with problems and stay out of problem and got along better with each other, and the girls now communicate better and have improved grades thanks to the program.

The following was the second question: *What are the school counselors' perspectives on the challenges of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?* The answer was that the challenges included finding the time to implement the program, and poor attendance and having the girls buy into the program as some girls were reluctant to participate. Lastly, the third research question was: *What are the school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?* The findings showed that the needed improvements included extending the DFT program to outside of school environment, including activities on how to address conflicts arising through social media, and updating DFT program material and the technology.

Section 3: The Project

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the DFT program on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. The local problem indicated an increase in discipline infractions during the 2016–2017, 2017–2018, 2018–2019, and 2019–2020 school years among Black sixth-grade tween girls in JCS. In this study, I focused on school counselors that had used the DFT program for their Black tween girls' behavior in the schools. Although the sample size was limited, this qualitative study's design gave a solid understanding of the school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior. Skinner's (1953) behaviorism theory was the lens used to guide the interviews.

Based on the findings of this study, school counselors can enrich their support from a white paper that provides insight on the role of social media and mentoring for Black tween girls. According to Prichard and Trowler (2018), a white paper presents major findings and their practical applications. The project I developed for this study is a white paper that documents the existing problem, analysis, and the findings. I explain both the literature and the research surrounding the study's recommendations. The paper can assist school counselors with having improved knowledge regarding social media and mentoring, specifically as it relates to helping their Black tween girls' behavior.

In Section 3, I present the objectives and justification for the project genre based on the study's findings and addressed the recommended improvements in the research study through the white paper's content. I additionally present a complete analysis of the

literature that supports the project genre, which includes pertinent articles and viewpoints from various sources. Lastly, a thorough explanation of the project's necessary resources, obstacles, opportunities, execution, and social change implications is also provided in this section.

Description and Goals

Numerous approaches may be used to reflect the results of a research study. Creswell (2015) emphasized that a policy or position paper, also known as a white paper, is a type of research report that is used in educational settings and provides information to policy makers and stakeholders for use in making decisions. I chose a white paper for my project because it allows the researcher to suggest solutions to a problem (see Appendix A). The literature has shown that Black tween girls require unique interventions that are culturally appropriate and programs that support their academic and social/emotional health. (see Aston et al., 2018; Fallon et al., 2022; McPherson, 2020). This study's local problem of increased discipline infractions among Black sixth-grade tweens acknowledged this concern and the need for support to assist this issue.

Consequently, this white paper aligns with the study's conceptual framework, Skinner's (1953) behaviorism theory. My goals with this white paper were to highlight the needed improvements for the DFT program by (a) extending the program outside of the school environment through mentorship, (b) providing relevant information on the use of and role of social media in Black sixth-grade tween lives, and (c) identifying the importance of updating the technology of the program.

Rationale

White papers are collections of suggestions or counsel assembled for an entity with the power or authority to make decisions (Saarinen, 2015). I selected a white paper as the project (see Appendix A) because the data analysis outlined in Section 2 presented the needed areas of improvement for the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior. The recommended areas of improvement were extending the program outside of the school environment through mentorship, providing relevant information on social media, and the identifying the importance of updating the program's technology.

The platform of a white paper allowed me to discuss the issues that resulted from the data analysis regarding the needed improvements of the DFT program as it relates to Black tween girls' behavior. Additionally, it allowed me to highlight key recommendations that may assist school counselors with building rapport and providing literature that could help their Black tween girls' social/emotional success. It is my hope that this white paper will serve as a resource and roadmap for school counselors in my local learning community to encourage support and healthy decision making for Black tween girls during this developmental stage.

Review of the Literature

With consideration of the findings of the study, information from the literature review supported the value of a white paper to use as a personal or collaborative tool, leading to a plan of action within the educational setting. It also allowed me to better understand the needed improvements for the DFT program to further help Black tween girls' behavior. The literature review results provided key recommendations to assist

school counselors with mentorship, social media, and technology with their Black tween girls.

I focused my literature search on the following educational databases: Google Scholar, Academic Search Premier, ERIC, ProQuest, SAGE, Education Source, and EBSCOhost. To identify appropriate sources, I used the following terms and combinations of terms for my search, *including white paper, position paper, recommendation paper, policy paper, school counselors, school counseling, Black girls, African American, tweens girls, girls, adolescents, mentor, mentoring, mentoring program, social media, technology, schools, and education.*

Scholarly Rationale of White Papers

The white paper is an effective resource that is used in a variety of settings. White papers have historically been used as official government reports since they were increasingly legitimate in character, but they are now used in business to assist companies (Graham, 2013; Willerton, 2013). However, white papers have become increasingly beneficial in other environments, especially in educational settings. Researchers noted that the greatest white papers educate, stimulate original thought, and creatively and effectively express a point of view using statistically valid data and well-researched conclusions (Herman, 2013; Ordway, 2018; Saarinen, 2015).

White papers intend to target a specific audience, present an identified position, or evaluate a program or theory (Graham, 2013). Herman (2013) acknowledged that a white paper is the better platform to present program recommendations. Since the white paper now has a broader reach and is seen as an educational report based on facts, it is

respected as a valuable format to inform educational stakeholders and school counselors of the findings of this study. In my white paper, I highlighted the school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements and recommendations of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior while aligning with Skinner's (1953) behaviorism theory.

Mentorship

The literature has emphasized the need for Black tween girls to have culturally appropriate interventions to promote empowerment and a positive self-image (see ASCA, 2022b; Aston et al., 2018; Beasley, 2019; Brookover et al., 2021; Fuller et al., 2018; Graves et al., 2017; Harper et al., 2021; Mayes et al., 2018; Unroe et al., 2017).

According to DeMaria (2020), mentorship is described as a relationship in which a more knowing or experienced person helps to guide a less knowledgeable or experienced person. It is referred to as a partnership for learning and development between a person with extensive expertise and someone willing to learn. Dondero (1997) stated that a mentor is "one who listens to, cares for, gives advice, and shares information and life/career experiences with a young person requiring assistance" (p. 882). Therefore, school counselors could help establish these essential mentoring opportunities for their students (Will, 2021). Mentorship may extend outside of the school environment to foster a community-based support system for Black tween girls (Harper et al., 2021).

Community-based support places a strong emphasis on working together with the community, frequently providing a forum for the perspectives of marginalized and underrepresented groups (Brinkman et al., 2018). Mentors are essential, and they may even assist Black girls in avoiding early entry into the criminal justice system (Meadows-

Fernandez, 2019). Additionally, mentors offer an adult's viewpoint on accomplishing goals and frequently bridge the gap between where we are and where we want to go. This support is significant for Black girls, who are marginalized from educational and professional networks (Meadows-Fernandez, 2019).

The cultivation and upkeep of a positive sense of self and empowerment in Black tween girls have been demonstrated by mentoring programs (Brinkman et al., 2018; Lancaster et al., 2016; Unroe et al., 2017). For example, the Girls with a Purpose program is a mentoring program designed for Black adolescent girls (Harper et al., 2021). In this mentoring program, Harper et al. (2021) implemented several key areas of focus for the participating girls that included (a) academic success (e.g., encouraged learning activities), (b) community involvement (which reflects on the value of identity and values within the community), (c) cultural competency (reflects on the understanding of one's cultural and sense of belonging), (d) life skills (helping the girls' understand the importance of having a plan for future, good decision making, and setting goals), (e) positive life choices (e.g., inviting speakers to discuss topics related to health and wellness), (f) positive core values (implementing activities on character building), and (g) sense of self (which may include group discussions that motivate and encourage a positive self-image).

Mentoring programs have many benefits, but equally, potential challenges have been raised by researchers, too. The mentor's ability to communicate support by conduct and example, as well as the ability to forge connections and relationships, may be crucial for the success of the mentoring relationship (Brinkman et al., 2018). Further, researchers

have agreed that an important context for developing connections and sharing knowledge with one another is where the mentees must actively participate in their own positive growth (Billingsley et al., 2021; Overton & Molenaar, 2015; Schwartz & Rhodes, 2016). The mentor must encourage the girls to have a voice and autonomy during the mentoring process. Nonetheless, mentoring for Black girls have shown to have a tremendous impact on their feeling of belonging, self-identity, and increased motivation for the future (Billingsley et al., 2021; Brinkman et al., 2018; Harper et al., 2021; Unroe et al., 2017).

Social Media

Regarding adolescents' internet and social media practices and perceptions, the Pew Research Center conducted a national study and found that over 95% have access to a phone, and 45% of the participants consistently used social media (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Odgers and Robb (2020) and Rideout and Robb (2019) emphasized that adolescents' social media usage is at a record high in terms of popularity, regularity, and duration. Users of all ages are affected by the positive and bad consequences of social media usage on their health and wellbeing, but adolescents are particularly susceptible because of their near-constant use of technology (Casares & Binkley, 2022).

Booker et al. (2018) discovered strong links between social media use and wellbeing, particularly among tween girls. It's noteworthy that girls use the internet daily at a rate of 70% compared to boys' usage of 56% (Casares & Binkley, 2022).

Additionally, it has been demonstrated that when tween girls use social media it is linked to subsequent decreases in wellbeing (Booker et al., 2018; Casares & Binkley, 2022; Fardouly et al., 2015; Levine & Stekel, 2016; Stronge et al., 2015; Twenge & Martin,

2020). The wellbeing of tweens may be impacted since they are developmentally predisposed to emotional instability and social comparison at this period of development (Weinstein, 2017). Social media can be an empowering tool or, on the other hand, can negatively affect adolescent development, the nature of relationships, and one's self-concept (Burt, 2018; Casares & Binkley, 2022; Cohen et al., 2019; Levine & Stekel, 2016).

Tweens, in general, can use social media as a vital tool when they are safe online (Brar, 2022). However, tween girls should have a support system around them as they navigate their lives online to position them for success in becoming the people they want to be, both online and offline (Brar, 2022). The Pew Research Center noted that minority students were more engaged in social media than their counterparts (Casares & Binkley, 2022). This further supports the need for school counselors to have appropriate information to educate their Black tween girls on the best social media practices. According to Swank et al. (2018), school counselors frequently play important roles in the school environment in preventing and intervening in social media concerns. In school settings, school counselors are uniquely positioned to offer advice and assistance to students and staff to reduce social media conflicts among tweens.

Through education, orientation, and programs, Bolu-Steve et al. (2022) recommended that school counselors can help tweens recognize the risks connected with social media and peer pressure. School counselors must professionally raise awareness of the risks that improper usage of social media could have on tweens. Tinstman Jones et al. (2019) stated that school counselors could provide tweens with concrete examples,

facilitate role plays, or create scenarios that show how to safely engage with others on social media platforms while using effective communication techniques. When used properly, social media platforms can give school counselors interesting cultural touchstones and valuable resources to support meaningful interactions, encourage the development of social skills, and promote informed decision-making among their Black tween girls (Burt, 2018; Goodrich et al., 2020; Parnell, 2017).

Technology

Many researchers believe technology can be a valuable educational tool (Deslonde & Becerra, 2018; Serdyukov, 2017; Sung et al., 2016). However, school counselors must be innovative in how they use technology to deliver their comprehensive school counseling services (Abdillah et al., 2020). The promise of technology as a delivery method to boost the success of comprehensive school counseling programs is increasingly being discussed, rather than the technology itself, with a focus on the usage in school counseling (Steele et al., 2020). Due to school counselors' time restraints (Savitz-Romer et al., 2021) perceived usefulness also has an impact on technology uptake. The user's perception of how valuable a certain technology is to the ease of their job performance will determine their usage (Tarhini et al., 2015). Unfortunately, there are times when it is not possible for counselors to use technology to its full potential. (Glasheen & Campbell, 2009; Mason et al., 2018).

The DFT program was limited in its technological reach due to the use of a CD-ROM to access the handouts for the program. Based on the study's findings, school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements included recommendations for

upgrading the program's technology. This concern will be raised with the publisher, who will be a recipient of this white paper, to seek options for this technology upgrade. It is apparent that the function of the school counselor can change daily and involve time spent on various duties that benefit students and school staff (Mason et al., 2018). Nonetheless, intentionally and purposefully using technology can strengthen the school counselor's ability to effectively serve all students, increase access to resources, and boost overall student success.

Project Description

Based on the data analysis, findings of the study, and the literature review, I developed a white paper that highlighted the school counselors' perspectives of the needed improvements of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior. In my white paper, I shared the conclusions of the study and brought awareness to the value of school counselors' perspectives regarding culturally appropriate small group interventions and the needed improvements to the DFT program. The recommendations consisted of extending the program outside of school through mentorship, providing more resources on social media, and upgrading the technology of the program.

An overview of the literature is provided in the white paper's introduction, which is followed by a description of the local problem and the three aspects that have been recognized as needed improvements: (a) extending the program outside of the school environment through mentorship, (b) social media resources, and (c) upgrading the technology of the DFT program. The white paper concludes with recommendations based on the research findings to improve Black tween girls' behavior through implementation

of resources for mentorship programs, social media skills, and ways to improve school counseling technology usage. The white paper's recommendations will be shared with key stakeholders and school counselors in the local learning community between January and March. After strategies are shared, the proposed implementation of the white paper's recommendations will be recommended for the start of the 2024-2025 school year. The results of the white paper may improve the discipline infraction rates among Black sixth-grade tween girls in JCS by empowering their school counselors with updated literature to assist in improving the DFT program.

Needed Resources and Existing Supports

The primary resource needed for this project study to be presented to the school counselors and stakeholders is the cost of copying and binding together the white paper. The white paper will also be provided electronically if this resource becomes unavailable. Another resource needed is time, as it will be important that the stakeholders are willing to allow the school counselors to allocate time within their schedule to read and share the white paper findings. I will also be a resource to provide feedback regarding the study's findings and possible ways to implement the recommendations in their school environment. I do have the support of my existing local school community to share the white paper's results.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

The main potential barrier is the school stakeholders being open to the school counselors taking time off campus for me to provide them with the findings of my white

paper. This barrier could be addressed by me going to the school counselor's school environment and sharing the results of my study without them leaving campus.

Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

It is my responsibility to develop the white paper and have it printed. I am also responsible for contacting my local school system's stakeholders and arranging a time to discuss the significance of the findings. In addition, I am responsible for providing copies of the white paper for the school counselors and stakeholders to review in advance of the meeting. This will allow the stakeholders and school counselors to have sufficient time to prepare questions. On my end, I will be prepared to allocate time to answer any questions after the white paper have been summarized.

I will also make accommodations if further meetings are needed to discuss my white paper among stakeholders and school counselors. In turn, stakeholders and school counselors are responsible for reading the white paper in detail, attending the scheduled meeting(s), engaging in discussions, and being open to implementing the proposed recommendations. More broadly, I will be responsible for providing the white paper to the publisher of the DFT program. The publisher will be responsible for looking at ways to allow school counselors to access the DFT's program activities through upgraded technology. Additional meetings will be arranged with the publisher if needed. Finally, I will present this information if opportunities arise at school counseling conferences to share the study results and the importance of the recommendations.

Project Evaluation Plan

The proposed recommendations of this white paper are: (a) extending the program outside of the school environment through mentorship, (b) social media resources, and (c) upgrading the technology of the DFT program for school counselors. Since the white paper was prepared for a targeted group, it is necessary to consider that group when assessing the effectiveness of the white paper. To justify the effectiveness of my study, I will develop a formative evaluation to determine the value of my white paper. Mimirinis (2019) emphasized that evaluation and feedback are essential components of the learning process, regardless of modality. Implementing a formative evaluation will maximize the likelihood that the finished project will achieve the stated objectives (Flagg, 2013). Therefore, the formative evaluation will assist the white paper in being evaluated in the least nonbiased and ethical manner.

I will send each formative evaluation participant a copy of the white paper as an attachment document via email, along with the survey. This evaluation method enables me to promptly address any relevant concerns (Nolette et al., 2017). As a result, the school counselors' survey feedback through email will be used to gauge their comprehension and thoughts regarding the recommendations. The feedback from the formative assessment will be provided through comments, questions, and dialogue. In the long term, the value of the project will be ascertained through the implementation of recommendations by the school counselors, and ultimately, the effectiveness will be determined by the decrease in discipline infractions among their Black tween girls.

Project Implications

The white paper (see Appendix A) recommended the strategies that should be considered to help improve the implementation of the DFT program while school counselors are working with Black tween girls. The white paper may prompt new discussions about the importance of fostering robust support systems for Black tween girls' and encouraging overall success, especially with behavior. Black adolescent girls are a significant population that is frequently ignored in schools due to colorblind perspectives and the complexity of numerous interlocking identities based on race and gender (Joseph et al., 2016). Consequently, Black girls are left to handle their issues independently as these issues go unnoticed, unaddressed, and unresolved. Research has discovered that school counselors could profoundly impact Black tween girls' lives by implementing a culturally appropriate program that fosters their gender and racial identity, thus improving their overall school experience (Cheng et al., 2020).

Therefore, by implementing the recommendations of this white paper, Black tweens girls could establish rapport with their school counselor and feel supported in the school environment (Aston et al., 2018; Fallon et al., 2022). Additionally, extending the support through mentorship opportunities, learning social media etiquette, and having access to the program through upgraded technology resources could create social change by providing the necessary tools for school counselors to foster a safe space and provide a voice for their Black tween girls, in turn decreasing inappropriate behavior.

Summary

In Section 3 of this project study, I described the objectives and justification for choosing the white paper as the project genre. I reviewed the literature and thoroughly explained the white paper's resources, barriers, roles, and responsibilities. I also provided how the effectiveness of the white paper will be evaluated. Additionally, the implications of social change, should the stakeholders and school counselors execute the white paper's recommendations were highlighted. In Section 4, I presented my reflections on self-development regarding the project's strengths and limitations and conclude with the importance of implications for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Black tween girls have faced challenges with increased discipline in the local school setting. This project was designed to provide insight into the school counselors' perspectives regarding the successes, challenges, and needed improvements of the DFT program and Black tween girls' behavior. The data analysis discovered that school counselors recommended that the DFT program be improved by extending the program outside of the school environment through mentorship, providing social media resources, and upgrading the program's technology. Further analysis and supporting literature indicated that the most appropriate project for this study's findings would be the development of a white paper. The white paper would provide results and recommendations for stakeholders and school counselors to assist with improving Black tween girls' behavior.

In this section, the reflection surrounding the study is provided, including the project's strengths and limitations. Additionally, reflections also include what was learned as it relates to the study's scholarship, development, evaluation, leadership, and change, as well as reflections on this process and how it has molded me as a scholar and practitioner. This section concludes by discussing the implications, applications, and directions for future research on Black tween girls' behavior.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

The strength of this qualitative project study centered around the importance of the school counselors' perspectives regarding the DFT program and their Black tween

girls' behavior. It was essential to highlight the need for Black tween girls to have a support system at school and the resources to assist with behavior. The study's findings and supported literature revealed that the program needed improvements to assist school counselors in continuing to foster support and providing the necessary resources for their Black tween girls to have overall school success. The white paper addressed those needed improvements by providing practical recommendations for this problem.

The white paper strengthened the study by indicating the problem and solutions that appropriately informs stakeholders and school counselors. The format of the white paper was outlined concisely to highlight the recommendations of the study. Stakeholders and school counselors may use the proposed recommendations to assist their Black tween girls' behavior further and create a pipeline of support. Ricks (2014) emphasized the need "to recognize and attend to the needs of this unique group and engage Black girls through programming" (p. 11); this white paper will provide research-based strategies to improve the DFT program and its implementation.

Limitations and Remediation

In this project, there were some limitations. One identified limitation was that the study only involved a small group of school counselors within a single school system. The small sample size may restrict the ability to make the study's findings applicable to different school systems. However, I hope the research provided a comprehensive body of information not only for the participating school system but recommendations that would benefit other school systems using the DFT program. The study's focus was another limitation of the study. Each school counselor reflected on their perspectives on

the DFT program as it related to their Black tween girls; the findings would not apply to other ethnic groups. Additional research could potentially diminish some of these limitations, with more school systems being included to improve the generalizability of the study. The last limitation may be the willingness of the stakeholders and school counselor's capacity for implementation of the strategies included in the white paper. To remediate this concern, I will encourage efforts by providing resources and time to help streamline this potential barrier.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

The identified problem in this study was the increased discipline infractions among Black tween girls in the local school system. I addressed this problem by capturing the school counselors' perspectives of the DFT program through a qualitative approach with one-on-one interviews, and the results forming the project, a white paper. However, various methods exist for communicating educational research instead of a white paper. Creswell (2012) suggested other formats, including oral presentations, journal articles, and conference presentations.

Furthermore, I could have explored the perspectives of the Black tween girls that participated in the DFT program. This would have allowed me to have a deeper understanding of what improvements could have been made to the DFT program from the student's perspective. Other research approaches could have been considered for this study. The quantitative approach could have been used to examine the effectiveness of the DFT program in the local school settings and determine if the program improved based on decreased discipline infractions among the participants.

Scholarship

Scholarship is the method that fosters the growth of a discipline's body of knowledge (Moran et al., 2017). It is becoming increasingly clear that the value of scholarship is determined by how much it contributes to better outcomes in a particular discipline as opposed to generalizable information (Rolfe & Davies, 2009). The conceptualization of the project study has advanced my theoretical knowledge to introduce the results of my study and apply them in my discipline. I signified the importance of scholarship by using several databases to conduct extensive research that resulted in two literature reviews regarding school counselors and Black tween girls' behavior. The use of peer-reviewed articles and scholarly journals supported my study by considering a variety of researchers' perspectives and the most relevant information.

The doctoral process has also allowed me to better understand the significance of scholarly writing. It has always been a challenge of mine to write clearly and concisely. Walden University (n.d.) stated that "scholarly writing requires a different set of standards than other types of writing. Scholarly writing requires concise, precise, and clear language" (para. 2). The resources that were provided during my program allowed me to capture my scholarly voice and expand my writing ability. Finding my voice built confidence in my research process and allowed me to focus on expanding other necessary skills, including critical thinking and time management, that are required during the doctoral journey. Altogether these aspects have allowed me to enhance my scholarship capacity and contribute a resolution to a problem in my learning community.

Project Development and Evaluation

Project development involves using resources to plan and execute a project to accomplish desired goals (Irfan et al., 2021). When brainstorming on the project development for my study, I wanted to create an effective communication tool to present the recommendations of the study. I considered the audience, stakeholders, and school counselors and what format would inform the study's findings and recommendations appropriately. After consulting with my chair, developing a white paper was the best-suited project. Few researchers implement the white paper project format, and more scholars would benefit from using a white paper to present research results (Herman, 2013).

The white paper format has been recognized as an effective measure to communicate research findings, especially in educational settings. A white paper serves as a research-based document that assists a targeted audience in understanding a presented problem and provides given strategies to solve that problem (University of Massachusetts Lowell Library, 2023). The developed white paper will be presented in hopes that the solutions will be applied in their school setting among their Black tween girls. Additionally, Herman (2013) highlighted that it is essential to evaluate the recommendations of the white paper. I will provide a formative evaluation for the stakeholders and school counselors to gather feedback and suggestions from the white paper. This insight will be taken into consideration; Flagg (2013) emphasized that a formative evaluation will increase the probability that the white paper will achieve its stated goals.

Leadership and Change

As a school counselor, I prioritize advocating for my students, especially those who may not have always felt supported or are trying to find their voice. I took a particular interest in the Black tween girls in my school environment because they were sometimes misunderstood, which often caused behavior concerns. There was a missing link with small group counseling resources that spoke to the essence of their needs. As a result, I wanted to fill that gap and created the small-group program DFT. This is a direct example of leadership and being a change agent in my discipline. According to ASCA (2019a), leadership is an ethical obligation for school counselors to determine if the educational environment is progressing on the concerns of access and equity for all students. School counselors are leaders and change agents who play a critical role (Chen-Hayes et al., 2014; Koch, 2020). ASCA (2022a) suggested that school counselors act as empowering agents when they can engage with their students.

Throughout the development of my project study, I have become more inspired to spearhead efforts to encourage the necessity for school counselors to support their Black tween girls. The white paper provides strategies and research-based solutions to help start this effort. School counselors are the glue to many school settings; The Education Trust (2019) acknowledged that Black students were more inclined to initiate the support of their school counselor. Notably, student voice allows the students to make sense of their environment and their identity. In their educational setting, it is most significant because it acknowledges students' lived experiences to be present and influential in schools (Mathies et al., 2020). After completing this doctoral journey, I am motivated to continue

to advocate and support school counselors with the critical resources and understanding to work with their Black tween girls. I hope this white paper will lead to discussions and changed mindsets regarding Black tween girls and their behavior.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

Although I have obtained three degrees and consider myself an achiever, unfortunately, my desire to complete a doctoral degree almost felt unattainable. I sought to complete this enormous endeavor in the past, but it was put on hold due to countless challenges. Admittedly, this had been a personal regret, so I constantly reminded myself that this could be achieved in the future. Initially, when I first pondered the idea of completing my doctoral degree, I dealt with feelings of impostor syndrome. Bravata et al. (2020) stated that impostor syndrome characterizes high achievers who struggle with internalizing their achievements, self-doubt, and dread being discovered as a deceiver or impostor regardless of their objective successes. This thought pattern makes it difficult for those individuals to appropriately attribute their performance to their actual competence (Bravata et al., 2020).

Moreover, I realized that there were several factors that I had to reassess to complete the program and solidify myself as a scholar. Firstly, I had to eliminate self-doubt and empower myself to be committed to the process. When I started the program, it was established that I would finish regardless of the obstacles. Secondly, I worked on improving my scholarly writing skills. I participated in a course that helped with scholarly writing strategies and ensuring that literature was written concisely. Another aspect was allocating the time required to complete my research study. Time

management was essential to success during this rigorous process, especially managing assignments, recruiting participants, and creating completion timelines. As a scholar, I learned that it encompasses self-reflection, acknowledging strengths, and being diligent in advancing the deficits.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As a practitioner, I am responsible for discovering solutions to pressing issues within the learning community. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) described practitioner research as an applied study based on practices, issues, or challenges practitioners and educators face in their day-to-day work and that impact their professional practice. Walden University's virtual residency provided the experience to further professional practice and supplied invaluable information to prepare as a scholar-practitioner. It involved extensive days of sharing resources and meeting other doctoral students with the same passion for education. The residency was a jumpstart to ensure the successful completion of the program. I compiled those resources and information to establish alignment in my proposal. Furthermore, while evolving in the research process, I strengthened my competence while completing the data analysis and developing the project. After completing this rigorous process, I am confident that I have a research-based project that will impact and contribute to the learning environment.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

During the development of my project, the white paper empowered me to envision myself as a project developer. The white paper's development allowed me to bolster my project development skills and establish recommendations to be used

practically. The developed strategies focused on providing school counselors with solutions to help support their Black tween girls' behavior and success in school. Developing a practical white paper requires commitment, scholarly inquiry, execution, and evaluation. My approach as a project developer has been enhanced to comprehensively understand the essential components required to complete a research study project.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Completing this research project study is a testament to the significant impact that school counselors can make in Black tween girls' lives. As a school counselor and Black woman, I would see specific disparities in schools among the Black tween girls compared to the overall student body regarding discipline. Researchers have noted this disparity among Black tween girls in education (Annamma et al., 2019; Hines & Wilmot, 2018; Kemp-Graham, 2018; Morris & Perry, 2017; Williams, 2017). As a leader in my school settings and support for all students, especially the Black tween girls in my school community, there was a sense of urgency to establish a culturally appropriate resource that would foster student support and empower my Black tween girls. The DFT program, a small counseling program, was developed. However, I was aware the DFT program needed improvements since its inception in 2014. The school counselors' perspectives captured during this study provided an understanding of ways to enhance the program.

The recommendations from the data analysis acknowledged the essential need to improve the DFT program. The themes that emerged were: (a) extending the program outside of the school environment through mentorship, (b) social media resources, and (c)

upgrading the technology of the DFT program. The developed white paper can guide school counselors to have strategies to continue building rapport and strengthen the support for their Black tween girls and their behavior. Literature has emphasized the need for school counselors to provide culturally relevant materials and activities to develop supportive relationships with Black tween girls (ASCA, 2022b; Aston et al., 2018; Beasley, 2019; Brookover et al., 2021; Fuller et al., 2018; Mayes et al., 2018). The white paper's recommendations are important to provide a resource for school counselors to assist their Black tween girls. This study will contribute to the additional body of research on the importance of instilling in Black tween girls' that they have a voice and ensuring empowerment in their school environment (Mathies et al., 2020).

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The findings of the project study indicated that school counselors having appropriate small group counseling resources is significant among Black tween girls. School counselors substantially impact Black tween girls' success if relationships are built, and resources are provided (Cheng et al., 2020; Merlin, 2017). As a result of the study, stakeholders and school counselors have research-based solutions to improve Black tween girls' behavior by extending the DFT program outside of the school environment through mentorship, providing relevant information on social media, and the importance of updating the program's technology. The white paper provided to the stakeholders and school counselors highlights the importance for Black tween girls to be understood and not overlooked and the need to provide support and resources to encourage positive social-emotional health. This is significant due to the alarming studies

on Black tween girls' discipline and lack of support (Caldera, 2018; Joseph et al., 2016; Letendre & Rozas, 2015; Mathies et al., 2020; Morris & Perry, 2017).

The white paper aims to bring awareness to the fact that school counselors profoundly impact Black tween girls' behavior, especially when culturally relevant programs are implemented. It is my hope that the white paper's recommendations will open discussions about the need to establish better support systems for Black tween girls and the implementation of the recommendations in the school district. Considering the formative evaluation's feedback of the white paper will have implications for future research. Additionally, future researchers can use this study's results to structure future quantitative or qualitative research studies surrounding school counselors supporting Black tween girls that may benefit other school systems and inform the field of education. Joseph et al. (2016) recognized that "Black adolescent girls are rarely positioned in a positive light; however, the challenges of being Black and female present issues that are nuanced and complicated (p. 8)". This speaks to a false narrative that deserves continued future exploration and examination to address Black tween girls having vital support systems in their school environments.

Conclusion

In Section 4, I outlined the reflections regarding the doctoral process. This included acknowledging the project study's strengths, limitations, and the applications of the results. Further, this section discussed the analysis of the self as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. The importance of this study was documented, and the significant impact of the developed white paper on school

counselors and Black tween girls' behavior. The white paper allowed me to acknowledge the essential need for school counselors to form support systems and provide appropriate resources for their Black tween girls. The doctoral journey has been fulfilling and further inspired my desire to mentor and guide Black tween girls to promote overall success in the school environment.

As I conclude this study, I continue to emphasize the integral support that school counselors can contribute to Black tween girls when culturally relevant resources are implemented. The project study captured the needed improvements to the DFT program, and the white paper provided strategies for stakeholders and school counselors to assist with Black tween girls' behavior in school. Despite the limitations, the implications of social change are clearly outlined in the white paper and can have a tremendous impact on school counselors' relationship-building with their Black tween girls. Dolet and Salas (2021) stated that it is crucial to establish a safe environment for Black tween girls. One of the primary responsibilities of the school counselor is to foster an environment that is safe for academic, social, and emotional growth (Beasley, 2019). It is my hope that this research study and developed white paper will spreadhead the implementation of resources and established safe places for Black tween girls in schools.

References

- Abdillah, H., Setyosari, P., Lasan, B., & Muslihati, M. (2020). The acceptance of school counselor in the use of ICT during school from home in the Covid-19 era. *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists*, 8(4), 1569–1582.
<https://doi.org/10.17478/jegys.804939>
- Adamschick, Z. P. (2010). The lived experience of girl-to-girl aggression in marginalized girls. *Qualitative Health Research*, 20(4), 541–555.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732310361611>
- ALSDE. (2022). *Jefferson County schools: 6th grade Black girls discipline infraction report*.
- American School Counselor Association. (2019a). *The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs* (4th ed.).
- American School Counselor Association. (2019b). *The essential role of the middle school counselor*. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/7ed7a427-a87a-4609-a4e1-ee8e5358df29/Why-Middle.pdf>
- American School Counselor Association. (2020). *The school counselor and group counseling*. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/ASCA-Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Group-Counseling>
- American School Counselor Association. (2022a). *ASCA ethical standards for counselors*. [https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/Ethical-Responsibilities/ASCA-Ethical-Standards-for-School-Counselors-\(1\)](https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/Ethical-Responsibilities/ASCA-Ethical-Standards-for-School-Counselors-(1))

American School Counselor Association. (2022b, January). *ASCA research report:*

School counselors addressing racism and bias.

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/c8d94a64-fa33-4cad-ac07-224dc8e90195/2022-racism-bias-research-report.pdf>

American School Counselor Association. (2023). *The role of the school counselor.*

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/ee8b2e1b-d021-4575-982c-c84402cb2cd2/Role-Statement.pdf>

Amin, M. E. K., Nørgaard, L. S., Cavaco, A. M., Witry, M. J., Hillman, L., Cernasev, A., & Desselle, S. P. (2020). Establishing trustworthiness and authenticity in qualitative pharmacy research. *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*, 16(10), 1472–1482. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2020.02.005>

Anderson, M., & Jiang, J. (2018, May 31). *Teens, social media and technology 2018.*

Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/>

Annamma, S. A., Anyon, Y., Joseph, N. M., Farrar, J., Greer, E., Downing, B., & Simmons, J. (2019). Black girls and school discipline: The complexities of being overrepresented and understudied. *Urban Education*, 54(2), 211–242.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916646610>

Apuke, O. D. (2017). Quantitative research methods: A synopsis approach. *Kuwait*

Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review, 6(11), 40-47.

<https://doi.org/10.12816/0040336>

Armstrong, K. H., Ogg, J. A., Sundman-Wheat, A. N., & St. John Walsh, A. (2014).

Evidence-Based Interventions for Children with Challenging Behavior.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-7807-2>

Aston, C., Graves, S. L., Jr., McGoey, K., Lovelace, T., & Townsend, T. (2018).

Promoting sisterhood: The impact of a culturally focused program to address verbally aggressive behaviors in Black girls. *Psychology in the Schools*, 55(1), 50–62. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22089>

Babbie, E. (2016). *The basics of social research* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Balfanz, R., Byrnes, V., & Fox, J. (2014). Sent home and put off-track: The antecedents, disproportionalities, and consequences of being suspended in the ninth grade. *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk*, 5(2), Article 13. <https://doi.org/10.58464/2155-5834.1217>

Barnham, C. (2015). Quantitative and qualitative research: Perceptual foundations.

International Journal of Market Research, 57(6), 837–854.

<https://doi.org/10.2501/IJMR-2015-070>

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2015). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *Qualitative Report*,

<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1573>

Beasley, J. J. (2019). Girls' relational aggression: A small group intervention.

Professional School Counseling, 23(1), 2156759X2090209.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x20902099>

Bell, K., Fahmy, E., & Gordon, D. (2016). Quantitative conversations: The importance of developing rapport in standardised interviewing. *Quality & Quantity*, 50(1), 193-

212. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-014-0144-2>

Billingsley, J. T., Rivens, A. J., & Hurd, N. M. (2021). Family closeness and mentor formation among Black youth. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 30(3), 793–807. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-020-01895-y>

Boddy, C. R. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 19(4), 426-432. <https://doi.org/10.1108/qmr-06-2016-0053>

Bolu-Steve, F. N., Modupe, O., Alfred, A., & Alfred, A. (2022). Influence of social media on in-school adolescents' morals: Implication for school counsellors. *e-Bangi Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, 19(7). <https://doi.org/10.17576/ebangi.2022.1907.13>

Bonner, L., Hicks, J., & Pennie, G. (2019). Recreating community among gifted African American students through group counseling. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 44(4), 271–285. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2019.1669752>

Booker, C. L., Kelly, Y. J., & Sacker, A. (2018). Gender differences in the associations between age trends of social media interaction and well-being among 10-15 year olds in the UK. *BMC Public Health*. 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5220-4>

Bostick, D., & Anderson, R. (2009). Evaluating a small-group counseling program- A model for program planning and improvement in the elementary setting. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(6), 2156759X0901200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x0901200602>

- Brar, R. (2022). Adolescents and social media: Tools to navigate life online. *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, 14(3), 9–13.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1350840.pdf>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Hayfield, N., & Terry, G. (2019). Thematic analysis. *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*, 843-860.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5251-4_103
- Bravata, D. M., Watts, S. A., Keefer, A. L., Madhusudhan, D. K., Taylor, K. T., Clark, D. M., Nelson, R. S., Cokley, K. O., & Hagg, H. K. (2020). Prevalence, predictors, and treatment of impostor syndrome: A systematic review. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 35(4), 1252–1275. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-019-05364-1>
- Brewington, M., & Kushner, J. (2020). School counselor perceptions of a comprehensive school counseling model and implications for practice. *Administrative Issues Journal*, 10(2), 33–45. <https://dc.swosu.edu/aij/vol10/iss2/3/>
- Brinkman, B. G., Marino, S., & Manning, L. (2018). Relationships are the heart of the work: Mentoring relationships within gender-responsive programs for Black girls. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 30(4), 191–213.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08952833.2018.1490618>
- Brookover, D. L., Hermann, M. A., & Deitz, M. E. (2021). School counseling through a

developmental lens: Implications for working with adolescent girls. *Journal of School Counseling*, 19(43), Article n43.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1328850.pdf>

Bryant, D., & Wilson, A. (2020). Factors potentially influencing discipline referral and suspensions at an affiliated charter high school. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.5590/jerap.2020.10.1.08>

Bulimwengu, A. S., & Cartmel, J. (2022). The tween years: A systematic literature review for services for children aged 10–13 years. *Heliyon*, 8(1), e08822.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e08822>

Burkholder, G. J., Cox, K. A., Crawford, L. M., & Hitchcock, J. H. (Eds). (2020). *Research designs and methods: An applied guide for the scholar-practitioner*. SAGE Publications.

Burt, I. (2018). Media's influence on self-image and romantic relationship decision-making in college-age clients: What mental health counselors should know. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 13(3), 275–287.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2018.1426508>

Caldera, A. (2018). Suspendable and expendable, kicking out and throwing away Black girls: An analysis of a school district's policies and practices. *Texas Education Review*, 7(1), 30–47. <https://doi.org/10.26153/tsw/10>

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652–661.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>

Cappella, E., Schwartz, K., Hill, J., Kim, H. Y., & Seidman, E. (2019). A national sample of eighth-grade students: The impact of middle grade schools on academic and psychosocial competence. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 39(2), 167–200.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431617735653>

Caramanis, C. N., & Owens, J. (2020, May). *Examining the predictors of children's school suspension and expulsion* [Policy brief]. Texas Education Research Center.

<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED609089>

Casares, D. R., Jr., & Binkley, E. E. (2022). An unfiltered look at idealized images: A social media intervention for adolescent girls. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 17(3), 313–331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2021.1892556>

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Cheng, Y.-J., Smith, L., Ritzi, R., Wagner, T., & Pertuit, T. L. (2020). Counselor preparation in working with African American adolescents in group counseling. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 45(1), 3–21.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2019.1699620>

Chen-Hayes, S. F., Ockerman, M. S., & Mason, E. C. M. (2014). *101 solutions for school counselors and leaders in challenging times*. Sage Publications.

<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483345932>

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (2009). *Inquiry as stance: Practitioner research for the next generation*. Teachers College Press.

- Coelho, V. A., Marchante, M., & Jimerson, S. R. (2017). Promoting a positive middle school transition: A randomized-controlled treatment study examining self-concept and self-esteem. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(3), 558-569. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0510-6>
- Cohen, R., Irwin, L., Newton-John, T., & Slater, A. (2019). #bodypositivity: A content analysis of body positive accounts on Instagram. *Body Image*, 29, 47–57. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2019.02.007>
- Commission on Black Girls. (2020, July). *A report of the quality of life of Black girls in Columbus, Ohio*. <https://www.columbus.gov/cobgreport/>
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research, enhanced Pearson eText with loose-leaf version--access card package*. Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

- Crossman, A. (2017). *An overview of qualitative research methods*. ThoughtCo.
<https://www.thoughtco.com/qualitative-research-methods-3026555>
- Cunliffe, A. L., & Alcadipani, R. (2016). The politics of access in fieldwork: Immersion, backstage dramas, and deception. *Organizational Research Methods, 19*(4), 535–561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428116639134>
- Dastpak, M., Behjat, F., & Taghinezhad, A. (2017). A comparative study of Vygotsky’s perspectives on child language development on child language development with nativism and behaviorism. *International Journal of Languages’ Education, 5*(2), 230–238. <https://doi.org/10.18298/IJLET.1748>
- DeMaria, A. N. (2020). Mentorship. *Structural Heart, 4*(6), 451–452.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/24748706.2020.1832407>
- Deslonde, V., & Becerra, M. (2018). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM): Exploring school counselors’ acceptance and use of Naviance. *The Professional Counselor, 8*(4), 369–382. <https://doi.org/10.15241/vd.8.4.369>
- DeVries, M., Fenchel, M., Fogarty, R. E., Kim, B. D., Timmons, D., & White, A. N. (2017). Name it! Store it! Protect it! A systems approach to managing data in research core facilities. *Journal of Biomolecular Techniques: JBT, 28*(4), 137-141. <https://doi.org/10.7171/jbt.17-2804-003>
- Dolet, T. C., & Salas, S. (2021). “So she might know her beauty”: Creating safe spaces for Black girls in the middle grades. *Middle School Journal, 52*(4), 4–12.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2021.1948293>
- Dondero, G. M. (1997). Mentors: Beacons of hope. *Adolescence, 32*, 881–887.

- Duong, J., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2017). Links between contexts and middle to late childhood social-emotional development. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 60*(3-4), 538–554. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12201>
- The Education Trust, Reach Higher, & American School Counselor Association. (2019, February). *School counselors matter*. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/b079d17d-6265m-4166-a120-3b1f56077649/School-Counselors-Matter.pdf>
- Erford, B. T. (2019). *Group work: Process an application* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Espelage, D. L., Hong, J. S., Rao, M. A., & Thornberg, R. (2015). Understanding ecological factors associated with bullying across the elementary to middle school transition in the United States. *Violence and Victims, 30*(3), 470–487. <https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.vv-d-14-00046>
- Fallon, L. M., DeFouw, E. R., Cathcart, S. C., Berkman, T. S., Robinson-Link, P., O’Keeffe, B. V., & Sugai, G. (2022). School-based supports and interventions to improve social and behavioral outcomes with racially and ethnically minoritized youth: A review of recent quantitative research. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 31*(1), 123–156. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10864-021-09436-3>
- Feldwisch, R. P., & Whiston, S. C. (2015). Examining school counselors’ commitments to social justice advocacy. *Professional School Counseling, 19*(1), 1096-2409-19.1. <https://doi.org/10.5330/1096-2409-19.1.166>
- Flagg, B. N. (2013). *Formative evaluation for educational technologies*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203052181>

- Fuller, L. B., Dye, L., Morris, J. R., Craig, S., & Dickson, J. (2018). Group counseling: African American adolescent females' resiliency, self-efficacy and racial identity. *Wisconsin Counseling Journal, 31*, 39–56.
- Fuller, L. B., Hall-Sally, S., Clay, T., & Reeves, P. (2016). African American college women's reactions: A group program providing counseling and spiritual support. In T. Hicks (Ed.), *Spirituality research studies in higher education* (pp. 116–142). University Press of America.
- Geldard, K., Geldard, D., & Foo, R. Y. (2016). *Counselling adolescents: The proactive approach for young people* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Gibbs Grey, T. D., & Harrison, L. M. (2020). Call me worthy: Utilizing storytelling to reclaim narratives about Black middle school girls experiencing inequitable school discipline. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 53*(3), 325–341.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2020.1764880>
- Glasheen, K., & Campbell, M. (2009). The use of online counselling within an Australian secondary school setting: A practitioner's viewpoint. *Counselling Psychology Review, 24*(2), 42–51. <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpscpr.2009.24.2.42>
- Glense, C. (2016). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (5th ed.). Pearson.
- Goodrich, K. M., Kingsley, K. V., & Sands, H. C. (2020). Digitally responsive school counseling across the ASCA National Model. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 42*(2), 147–158. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-020-09396-9>
- Graham, G. (2013). *White papers for dummies*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Graves, S. L., Herndon-Sobalvarro, A., Nichols, K., Aston, C., Ryan, A., Blefari, A., Schutte, K., Schachner, A., Vicoria, L., & Prier, D. (2017). Examining the effectiveness of a culturally adapted social-emotional intervention for African American males in an urban setting. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 32(1), 62–74. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000145>
- Green, A. L., Ferrante, S., Boaz, T. L., Kutash, K., & Wheeldon-Reece, B. (2021). Social and emotional learning during early adolescence: Effectiveness of a classroom-based SEL program for middle school students. *Psychology in the Schools*, 58(6), 1056–1069. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22487>
- Guyer, A. E., Silk, J. S., & Nelson, E. E. (2016). The neurobiology of the emotional adolescent: From the inside out. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 70, 74–85. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2016.07.037>
- Harper, E. A., James, A. G., Curtis, C., & Ramey, D. (2021). Using the participatory culture-specific intervention model to improve a Positive Youth Development program for African American adolescent girls. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 31(1), 61–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2019.1652618>
- Harris, P. N., Shillingford, M. A., & Bryan, J. (2018). Factors influencing school counselor involvement in partnerships with families of color: A social cognitive exploration. *Professional School Counseling*, 22(1), 2156759X1881471. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x18814712>
- Harrison, H., Birks, M., Franklin, R., & Mills, J. (2017). Case study research:

Foundations and methodological orientations. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*
Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 18(1). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-18.1.2655>

Herman, L. (2013). *Tips for writing policy papers: A policy lab communication workshop*. Stanford Law School. <https://law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/White-Papers-Guidelines.pdf>

Hines, D. E., & Wilmot, J. M. (2018). From spirit-murdering to spirit-healing: Addressing anti-Black aggressions and the inhumane discipline of Black children. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 20(2), 62–69.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2018.1447064>

Irfan M., Khan S. Z., Hassan N., Hassan, M., Habib, M., Khan, S., Khan, H. H. (2021). Role of project planning and project manager competencies on public sector project success. *Sustainability*, 13(3), 1421. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13031421>

James, D., Flynn, A., Lawlor, M., Courtney, P., Murphy, N., & Henry, B. (2011). A friend in deed? Can adolescents be taught to cope with relational aggression? *Child Abuse Review*, 20(6), 439–454. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.1120>

Joseph, N. M., Viesca, K. M., & Bianco, M. (2016). Black female adolescents and racism in schools: Experiences in a colorblind society. *The High School Journal*, 100(1), 4–25. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2016.0018>

Kahlke, R. M. (2014). Generic qualitative approaches: Pitfalls and benefits of methodological mixology. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 13(1), 37–52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691401300119>

- Kaplan, A., & Patrick, H. (2016). *Learning environments and motivation* (2nd ed.).
Routledge.
- Kaplan, J. S. (1995). *Beyond behavior modification: A cognitive-behavioral approach to behavior management in the school* (3rd ed.). Pro-Ed.
- Kemp-Graham, K. Y. (2018). #BlackGirlsMatter: A case study examining the intersectionality of race, gender, and school discipline. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 21(3), 21–35.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458917741171>
- Koch, S. (2020, February). *School counselors are school leaders*. Nebraska School Counseling Association. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Newsletters/March-2020/School-Counselors-are-School-Leaders?st=NE>
- Kretchmar, S. (2014). A phenomenology of competition. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 41(1), 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00948705.2013.787365>
- Kull, R. M., Gretak, E. A., & Kosciw, J. G. (2019). *Supporting safe and healthy schools for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students: A national survey of school counselors, social workers, and psychologists*. GLSEN.
https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Supporting_Safe_and_Healthy_Schools_%20Mental_Health_Professionals_2019.pdf
- Kwon, K., Kim, E. M., & Sheridan, S. M. (2014). The role of beliefs about the importance of social skills in elementary children's social behaviors and school attitudes. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 43(4), 455–467.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-014-9247-0>

- Lan, J., & Sher, T. G. (2019). Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapy. *Encyclopedia of Couple and Family Therapy*, 497-505. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-49425-8_40
- Lancaster, C., Lenz, S., Willis, E., Brownlee, T. W., Smith, B. N., & Omura, J. K. (2016). Factors of mentor attrition from an after-school community-based mentoring program. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 14(2), 122–134.
- Lester, J. N., Cho, Y., & Lochmiller, C. R. (2020). Learning to do qualitative data analysis: A starting point. *Human Resource Development Review*, 19(1), 94–106. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484320903890>
- Letendre, J., & Rozas, L. W. (2015). “She can’t fight ’cause she acts White”: Identity and coping for girls of color in middle school. *Children & Schools*, 37(1), 46–53. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdu030>
- Letendre, J., & Smith, E. (2011). “It’s murder out today”: Middle school girls speak out about girl fighting. *Children & Schools*, 33(1), 47–57. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/33.1.47>
- Levine, D. T., & Stekel, D. J. (2016). *So why have you added me?* Adolescent girls’ technology-mediated attachments and relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 63, 25–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.05.011>
- Luciani, M., Campbell, K., Tschirhart, H., Ausili, D., & Jack, S. M. (2019). How to design a qualitative health research study. Part 1: Design and purposeful sampling

considerations. *Professioni Infermieristiche*, 72(2), 152–61.

<https://www.profinf.net/pro3/index.php/IN/article/download/632/270>

Malekoff, A. (2014). *Group work with adolescents: Principles and practices* (3rd ed.).

The Guilford Press.

Martin, G., & Pear, J. (2003). *Behavior modification: What it is and how to do it* (7th ed.).

Prentice Hall.

Mason, E. C. M., Griffith, C., & Belser, C. T. (2018). School counselors' use of technology for program management. *Professional School Counseling*, 22(1),

2156759X1987079. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x19870794>

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative

interviews. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social*

Research, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-11.3.1428>

Mathies, L. M., Dawson-Edwards, C., & Carpenter, B. W. (2020). The new Jane Crow:

Using Black girls' voices to make meaning of disciplinary interactions in an urban alternative school. *International Journal of Student Voice*, 7(1). Article 3

<https://sites.psu.edu/ijsv/volume-7-special-issue/>

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Mayes, S. D., Castagna, P. J., & Waschbusch, D. A. (2020). Sex differences in externalizing and internalizing symptoms in ADHD, autism, and general population samples. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral*

Assessment, 42(3), 519–526. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10862-020-09798-4>

- Mayes, R. D., Dollahide, C. T., & Young, A. (2018). School counselors as leaders in school turnaround. *Journal of Organizational & Educational Leadership*, 4(1), Article 3. https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/joel/vol4/iss1/3/?no_redirect=true
- Mayes, R. D., Lowery, K., Mims, L. C., & Rodman, J. (2021). "I stayed just above the cusp so I was left alone": Black girls' experiences with school counselors. *The High School Journal*, 104(3), 131–154. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2021.0003>
- McMahon, S. A., & Winch, P. J. (2018). Systematic debriefing after qualitative encounters: An essential analysis step in applied qualitative research. *BMJ Global Health*, 3(5), e000837. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2018-000837>
- McPherson, K. (2020). Black girls are not magic; they are human: Intersectionality and inequity in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) schools. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 50(2), 149–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2020.1729660>
- Meadows-Fernandez, A. R. (2019, September 19). How adult mentors can help give Black girls hope, and a better future. *The Washington Post*.
<https://tinyurl.com/mwcrjnn>
- Merlin, C. (2017). School counselors and multicultural education: Applying the five dimensions. *Journal of School Counseling*, 15(6).
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1144757.pdf>
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey Bass.
- Mimirinis, M. (2019). Qualitative differences in academics' conceptions of e-assessment.

Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 44(2), 233–248.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1493087>

Moran, K. J., Burson, R., & Conrad, D. (2017). *The Doctor of Nursing Practice scholarly project: A framework for success* (2nd ed.). Jones & Bartlett.

Morris, E. W., & Perry, B. L. (2017). Girls behaving badly? Race, gender, and subjective evaluation in the discipline of African American girls. *Sociology of Education*, 90(2), 127–148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040717694876>

Morris, M. W. (2016). Protecting Black girls. *Educational Leadership*, 74(3), 49–53.

Nakamoto, J., & Schwartz, D. (2010). Is peer victimization associated with academic achievement? A meta-analytic review. *Social Development*, 19(2), 221–242. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2009.00539.x>

Naser, S. & Dever, B. V. (2019). Mapping trajectories of behavioral and emotional risk among predominately African American youth across the middle school transition. *School Psychology Review*, 48(4), 362–376. <https://doi.org/10.17105/SPnaserR-2018-0054.V48-4>

Neth, E. L., Caldarella, P., Richardson, M. J., & Heath, M. A. (2020). Social-emotional learning in the middle grades: A mixed-methods evaluation of the *Strong Kids* program. *Research in Middle Level Education*, 43(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19404476.2019.1701868>

Niehaus, K., Rudasill, K. M., & Rakes, C. R. (2012). A longitudinal study of school connectedness and academic outcomes across sixth grade. *Journal of School Psychology*, 50(4), 443–460. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2012.03.002>

Nolette, S., Nguyen, A., Kogan, D., Oswald, C., Whittaker, A., & Chakraborty, A.

(2017). Efficacy of formative evaluation using a focus group for a large classroom setting in an accelerated pharmacy program. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 9(4), 633–638. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2017.03.004>

Odgers, C. L., & Robb, M. B. (2020, July 29). *Tweens, teens, tech, and mental health:*

Coming of age in an increasing digital, uncertain, and unequal world, 2020.

Common Sense Media. [https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/tweens-](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/tweens-teens-tech-and-mental-health-coming-of-age-in-an-increasingly-digital-uncertain-and-unequal-world-2020)

[teens-tech-and-mental-health-coming-of-age-in-an-increasingly-digital-uncertain-](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/tweens-teens-tech-and-mental-health-coming-of-age-in-an-increasingly-digital-uncertain-and-unequal-world-2020)

[and-unequal-world-2020](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/tweens-teens-tech-and-mental-health-coming-of-age-in-an-increasingly-digital-uncertain-and-unequal-world-2020)

Öğretir Özçelik, A. D. (2017). Aggression theories revisited: Lorenz's neoinstinctivism,

Wilson's socio-biology and Skinner's behavioral theories. *Journal of Asian*

Scientific Research, 7(2), 38–45. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.2.2017.72.38.45>

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of*

Nursing Scholarship, 33(1), 93–96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1547->

[5069.2001.00093.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1547-5069.2001.00093.x)

Ordway, D.-M. (2018, February 25). *White papers, working papers, research articles:*

What's the difference? The Journalist's Resource.

[https://journalistsresource.org/tip-sheets/research/working-papers-research-](https://journalistsresource.org/tip-sheets/research/working-papers-research-articles/)

[articles/](https://journalistsresource.org/tip-sheets/research/working-papers-research-articles/)

Overton, W. F., & Molenaar, P. C. (2015). Process, relations, and relational-

developmental systems. In W. F. Overton & P. C. Molenaar (Eds.), *Handbook of*

child psychology and developmental science (pp. 323–331). John Wiley & Sons.

- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533–544.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Parnell, J. (2017). Vlogging: A new phenomenon, but is it a concern for people's health? *Journal of Aesthetic Nursing*, 6(4), 196–198.
<https://doi.org/10.12968/joan.2017.6.4.196>
- Parzych, J., Donohue, P., Gaesser, A., & Chiu, M. (2019). *Measuring the impact of school counselor ratios on student outcomes*. American School Counselor Association. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/5157ef82-d2e8-4b4d-8659-a957f14b7875/Ratios-Student-Outcomes-Research-Report.pdf>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. SAGE Publications.
- Percy, W. H., Kostere, K., & Kostere, S. (2015). Generic qualitative research in psychology. *The Qualitative Report*, <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2097>
- Pinto, G., Bigozzi, L., Vettori, G., & Vezzani, C. (2018). The relationship between conceptions of learning and academic outcomes in middle school students according to gender differences. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 16, 45–54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2017.11.001>
- Poindexter, L. T. (2014). *Drama-Free Tweens: A group manual for “sassy” preteen girls*. Marco Products.

- Prichard, C., & Trowler, P. (Eds.). (2018). *Realizing qualitative research into higher education* (Vol. 7). Routledge.
- Punch, K. (2004) *Developing Effective Research Proposals*, SAGE Publications.
- Ramey, D. M. (2015). The social structure of criminalized and medicalized school discipline. *Sociology of Education*, 88(3), 181–201.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040715587114>
- Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. SAGE Publications.
- Ricks, S. A. (2014). Falling through the cracks: Black girls and education. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 4(1), 10–21.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1063223.pdf>
- Rideout, V., & Robb, M. B. (2019). *The Common Sense census: Media use by tweens & teens*. Common Sense.
<https://www.common sense media.org/sites/default/files/uploads/research/2019-census-8-to-18-full-report-updated.pdf>
- Rolfe, G., & Davies, R. (2009). Second generation professional doctorates in nursing. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 46(9), 1265–1273.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2009.04.002>
- Roulston, K. (2018). Qualitative interviewing and epistemics. *Qualitative Research*, 18(3), 322–341. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794117721738>
- Rust, J. P. (2019). Addressing the sociocultural determinants of African American students' academic achievement: The four themes of the American School

- Counselor Association's National Model and the role of school counselors. *Urban Education*, 54(8), 1149–1175. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916636657>
- Ryan, A., Graves, S., Sobalvarro, A., Nichols, K., Schutte, K., & Aston, C. (2016). An evaluation of strong kids in an urban African American female sample: The need for gender-specific and culturally focused interventions. *School Psychology Forum*, 10(2), 157–164.
- Saarinen, T. (2015). Policy as “wibbly-wobbly”: Operationalizations of discourse as material action. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37(2), 143-156.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cshe20>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). Goodall's verbal exchange coding: An overview and example. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(1), 36-39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800415603395>
- Saracho, O. N. (2017). Writing and publishing qualitative studies in early childhood education. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 45(1), 15–26.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-016-0794-x>
- Savitz-Romer, M., Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., Nicola, T. P., Alexander, E., & Carroll, S. (2021). When the kids are not alright: School counseling in the time of COVID-19. *AERA Open*, 7, 233285842110336.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584211033600>
- Schietz, R., & Villares, E. (2017). Effects of the girl squad curriculum on Grade 5 females' transition to middle school. *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation*, 8(1), 2–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21501378.2017.1327747>
- Schwartz, S. E. O., & Rhodes, J. E. (2016). From treatment to empowerment: New

- approaches to youth mentoring. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 58(1–2), 150–157. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12070>
- Serdyukov, P. (2017). Innovation in education: What works, what doesn't, and what to do about it? *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning*, 10(1), 4–33. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIT-10-2016-0007>
- Skiba, R. J., Chung, C.-G., Trachok, M., Baker, T. L., Sheya, A., & Hughes, R. L. (2014). Parsing disciplinary disproportionality: Contributions of infraction, student, and school characteristics to out-of-school suspension and expulsion. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(4), 640–670. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214541670>
- Skinner, B. F. (1953). *Science and human behavior*. Macmillan.
- Skinner, B. F. (1968). *The technology of teaching*. Prentice Hall.
- Slate, J. R., Gray, P. L., & Jones, B. (2016). A clear lack of equity in disciplinary consequences for Black girls in Texas: A statewide examination. *Journal of Negro Education*, 85(3), 250–260. <https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.85.3.0250>
- Steele, T., Nuckols, G., & Stone, C. (2020). Technology trends in school counseling. *Journal of School Counseling*, 18(10). <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1251792.pdf>
- Steen, S. (2011). Academic and personal development through group work: An exploratory study. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 36(2), 129–143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2011.562747>

- Steinberg, L. D. (2017). *Adolescence* (11th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Stronge, S., Osborne, D., West-Newman, T., Milojev, P., Greaves, L. M., Sibley, C. G., & Wilson, M. S. (2015). The Facebook Feedback Hypothesis of personality and social belonging. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 44*(2), 4–13.
- Sung, Y.-T., Chang, K.-E., & Liu, T.-C. (2016). The effects of integrating mobile devices with teaching and learning on students' learning performance: A meta-analysis and research synthesis. *Computers & Education, 94*, 252–275.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2015.11.008>
- Swank, J. M., Smith-Adcock, S., & Weaver, J. L. (2018). School counselors' roles and responsibilities in bullying prevention: A national survey. *Professional School Counseling, 22*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X19851465>
- Tarhini, A., Hone, K., & Liu, X. (2015). A cross-cultural examination of the impact of social, organisational and individual factors on educational technology acceptance between British and Lebanese university students. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 46*(4), 739–755. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12169>
- Tinstman Jones, J. L., Campbell, L. O., Stickl Haugen, J., & Sutter, C. C. (2019). Cyberbullying considerations for school counselors: A social media content analysis. *Professional School Counseling, 23*(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X20919365>
- Tracy, S. J. (2019). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Trowler, P. (2011, March 31). *Researching your own institution: Higher education*.

British Educational Research Association.

<http://www.bera.ac.uk/resources/researching-your-own-institution-higher-education>

Turner, D. W., III, & Hagstrom-Schmidt, N. (2022). *Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators*. Pressbooks.

<https://oer.pressbooks.pub/howdyorhello/back-matter/appendix-qualitative-interview-design/>

Twenge, J. M., & Martin, G. N. (2020). Gender differences in associations between digital media use and psychological well-being: Evidence from three large datasets. *Journal of adolescence*, 79(1), 91–102.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2019.12.018>

Twining, P., Heller, R. S., Nussbaum, M., & Tsai, C.-C. (2017). Some guidance on conducting and reporting qualitative studies. *Computers & Education*, 106, A1-

A9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2016.12.002>

Uher, J. (2016). What is behaviour? And (when) is language behaviour? A

metatheoretical definition: What is behaviour? And (when) is language behaviour? *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 46(4), 475-501.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12104>

University of Massachusetts Lowell Library. (2023, May 11). *White paper style guide*.

<https://libguides.uml.edu/c.php?g=750955&p=5378281>

Unroe, T., Barnett, R. V., & Payne-Purvis, C. (2017). An examination of self-esteem and empowerment of African American female youth in an after school program.

Journal of Youth Development, 11(3), 26–41.

<https://doi.org/10.5195/jyd.2016.458>

Walden University. (n.d.). *What is scholarly writing?*

<https://academicanswers.waldenu.edu/faq/72683>

Weinstein, E. (2017). Adolescents' differential responses to social media browsing:

Exploring causes and consequences for intervention. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 76, 396–405. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.07.038>

Weller, S. C., Vickers, B., Bernard, H. R., Blackburn, A. M., Borgatti, S., Gravlee, C. C.,

& Johnson, J. C. (2018). Open-ended interview questions and saturation. *PLoS One*, 13(6), e0198606. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0198606>

Welsh, R. O., & Little, S. (2018). The school discipline dilemma: A comprehensive review of disparities and alternative approaches. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(5), 752–794. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543187915822>

Will, M. (2021, July 29). When teachers and school counselors become informal mentors, students thrive. *Education Week*.

<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/when-teachers-and-guidance-counselors-become-informal-mentors-students-thrive/2021/07>

Willerton, R. (2013). Teaching white papers through client projects. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 76(1), 105–113.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1080569912454713>

Williams, V. (2017). Making gender visible: Title IX and discriminatory school

discipline. *Tennessee Journal of Race, Gender, & Social Justice*, 6(1), 67–82.

<https://ir.law.utk.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1103&context=rgsj>

Wolf, K. C., & Kupchik, A. (2017). School suspensions and adverse experiences in adulthood. *Justice Quarterly*, 34(3), 407–430.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2016.1168475>

Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Appendix A: The Project

Recommendations to Improve Drama-Free Tweens Program
for Black Tween Girls' Behavior

Walden University

White Paper

By Linda Thomas Poindexter

Introduction

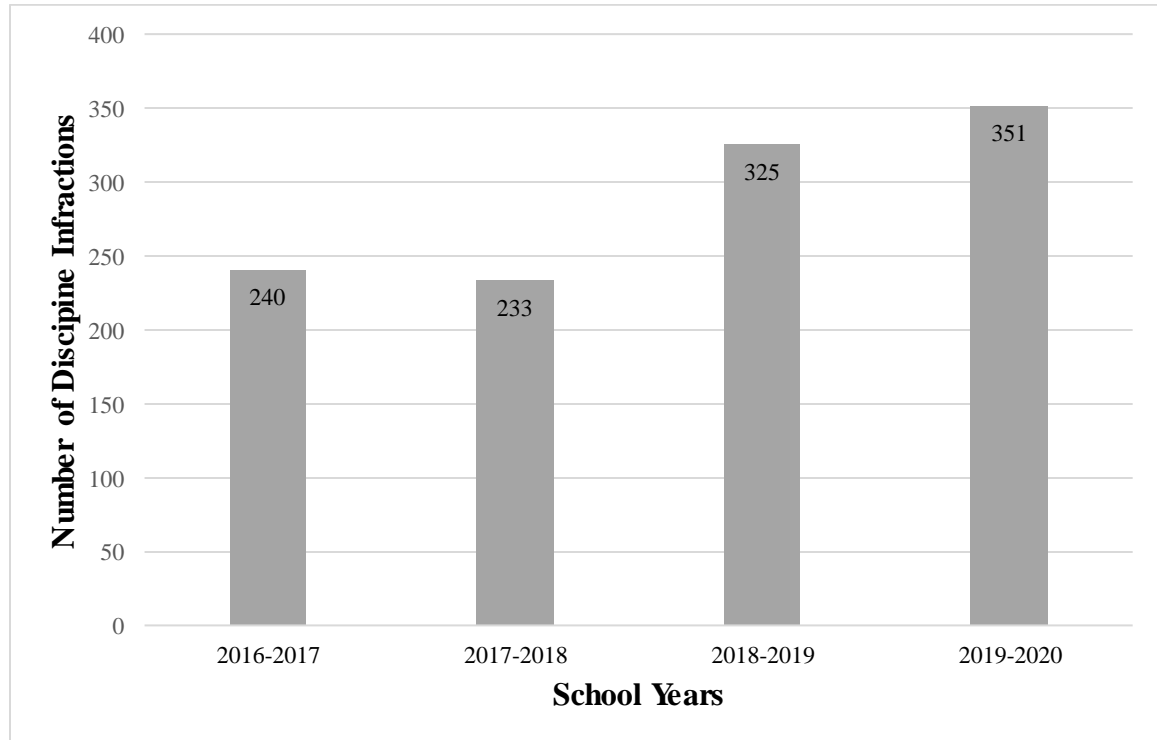
Numerous research studies suggest that Black girls have greater discipline infraction rates than their overall school population representation (Annamma et al., 2019; Hines & Wilmot, 2018; Kemp-Graham, 2018; Morris & Perry, 2017; Williams, 2017). Literature has indicated that school counselors and comprehensive school counseling programs play an essential role in addressing social and emotional issues that impede student achievement, such as implementing small groups programs to support Black tween girls' and utilizing for increased discipline (ASCA, 2019; Bostick & Anderson, 2009; Cheng et al., 2020; Steen, 2011). Mayes et al. (2021) explored the experiences of Black girls and their school counselors. Their study showed that when prepared with knowledge and information on the unique needs of Black girls in schools, school counselors can be key advocates in supporting Black girls. Notably, small group counseling programs with a culturally competent school counselor with the appropriate resources can significantly impact youth's lives (Cheng et al., 2020). Therefore, there was a need to explore school counselors' perspectives on needed improvements of the Drama-Free Tweens (DFT) program for Black tween girls' behavior. The DFT program is a small-group program designed to assist school counselors with their tweens' inappropriate behavior and assist with success in the school setting. The publisher of the program confirmed that 1,082 school counselors have or are currently using this program in their schools. The DFT program is used by countless districts but has been one of the primary interventions used by the district that is the focus of this study.

Local Problem

The local problem is that there was an increase in discipline infractions during the 2016–2017, 2017–2018, 2018–2019, and 2019–2020 school years among Black six-grade tween girls in Jefferson County Schools (JCS; a pseudonym). The numbers indicated a 44% increase in discipline infractions over a 4-year period. According to several local school counselors in JCS, there have been an increase in discipline concerns among their Black tween girls. The school counselors stated that there were limited resources that uniquely met the current needs of behavior concerns for their Black tween girls. The DFT program is a small-group program designed to assist school counselors with their tweens' inappropriate behavior and assist with success in the school setting. Despite using the DFT program since 2014, the discipline infractions have increased for Black tween girls from 2016–2020.

Figure 1

Total Number of Discipline Infractions for Sixth-Grade Black Tween Girls, 2016–2020



Purpose

The purpose of this white paper is to present recommendations to help improve Black tween girls' behavior. White papers are used for a variety of purposes, but they always share the feature of providing insight into a study and making recommendations based on the findings (Hoffman Marketing Communications, 2013). The objective of the white paper is to bring awareness of the research problem and the study's findings and supply valuable strategies to help school counselors support their Black tween girls' overall success, especially regarding behavior. Through the details provided in the white paper, the goal is to strengthen the DFT program which is already being used by the

district by focusing on recommendations for program improvements based on the school counselors' perspectives derived from the doctoral study's data analysis.

The difficulty that the local school counselors faced was having a culturally appropriate resource to assist their Black tween girls' who were challenged with behavior concerns. The school district had adopted the use of the DFT in 2014 and this was the first systematic analysis of counselors' perspectives on the program's efficacy. Eight school counselors shared their perspectives on using the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior. To gain a deeper understanding, questions were related to the successes, challenges, and needed improvements of the DFT program. This study aligned with Skinner's (1953) behaviorism theory which serves as its conceptual framework. Behaviorism theory suggests the need to analyze student behavior and change it using the environment so that the student may operate more fully in the classroom. Behavior modification, a keystone of behaviorism that relies on the systematic application of learning principles (Martin & Pear, 2003). School counselors may learn ways to assist behavior in promoting learning and success by recognizing the environmental aspects that influence student behavior and organizing the environment in response (Kaplan, 1995). Understanding ways to improve the DFT program from the school counselors' perspectives was essential to the success of this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the successes of the Drama-Free Tweens program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?

RQ2: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the challenges of the Drama-Free Tweens program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?

RQ3: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the Drama-Free Tweens program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?

Findings

The current study sought to explore school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the DFT program on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. In total, eight themes emerged from the data. The results of the data analysis are organized by the research questions. The themes are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Research Questions and Their Corresponding Themes

Research question	Themes used to address the research question
RQ1: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the successes of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?	Theme 1: Dramatic behavior in the girls decreased as they became less reactive and more respectful Theme 2: Girls learned ways of dealing with problems, stayed out of trouble, and got along better with each other Theme 3: Girls now communicate better and have improved grades
RQ2: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the challenges of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?	Theme 4: Finding the time to implement the program Theme 5: Poor attendance and having the girls buy into the program as some girls were reluctant to participate
RQ3: What are the school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?	Theme 6: Extend DFT program to outside of school environment Theme 7: Include activities on how to address conflicts arising through social media Theme 8: Update DFT program material and the technology

Recommendations

For this study, the third research question was as follows: *What are the school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools?* RQ3 provided the recommendations for the needed improvements for the DFT program. Three themes emerged from the data that help to answer this question. These are: (a) Theme 6: Extend DFT program to outside of school environment, (b) Theme 7: Include activities on how to address conflicts arising through social media, and (c) Theme 8: Update DFT program material and the technology. Table 2 shows the number of participants who mentioned each theme.

Table 2

Research Question 3 Themes

Theme	<i>n</i> of participants contributing to this theme (<i>N</i> = 8)	<i>n</i> of references to this theme in the data
Theme 6: Extend DFT program to outside of school environment	3	4
Theme 7: Include activities on how to address conflicts arising through social media	6	10
Theme 8: Update DFT program material and the technology	6	6

The emerging themes with RQ3 supported the need to extend the support of the DFT program outside the school environment with additional mentorship, upgrading accessing the technology of the DFT activities and more material to assist with social media concerns among their Black tween girls. School counselors are in a unique role to offer advice and assistance to students and staff to reduce social media conflict (Kull et al., 2019; Swank et al., 2018). Despite the enormous incidence and impact of both social

media issues, school counselors frequently lack the training and resources to provide their students (Tinstman Jones et al., 2019). The needed improvements of the DFT program may help the school counselors have a guide to combating conflicts concerning social media and ways to enrich Black Tween girls' success outside of the school setting with mentorship.

Recommendation 1: Mentorship

The literature has emphasized the need for Black tween girls to have culturally appropriate interventions to promote empowerment and a positive self-image (ASCA, 2022; Aston et al., 2018; Beasley, 2019; Brookover et al., 2021; Fuller et al., 2016; Graves et al., 2017; Harper et al., 2021; Mayes et al., 2018; Unroe et al., 2017).

According to DeMaria (2020), mentorship is described as a relationship in which a more knowing or experienced person helps to guide a less knowledgeable or experienced person. It is referred to as a partnership for learning and development between a person with extensive expertise and someone willing to learn.

Dondero (1997) stated that a mentor is “one who listens to, cares for, gives advice, and shares information and life/career experiences with a young person requiring assistance” (p. 882). Mentoring for Black girls have shown to have a tremendous impact on their feeling of belonging, self-identity, and increased motivation for the future (Billingsley et al., 2021; Brinkman et al., 2018; Harper et al., 2021; Unroe et al., 2017). Therefore, school counselors could help establish these essential mentoring opportunities for their students (Will, 2021). Mentorship may extend outside of the school environment to foster a community-based support system for Black tween girls (Harper et al., 2021).

Recommendation 2: Social Media

Tweens, in general, can use social media as a vital tool when they are safe online (Brar, 2022). However, tween girls should have a support system around them as they navigate their lives online in order to position them for success in becoming the people they want to be, both online and offline. The Pew Research Center noted that minority students were more engaged in social media than their counterparts (Casares & Binkley, 2022). This further supports the need for school counselors to have appropriate information to educate their Black tween girls on the best social media practices. According to Swank et al. (2018), school counselors frequently play important roles in the school environment in preventing and intervening in social media concerns. In school settings, school counselors are uniquely positioned to offer advice and assistance to students and staff to reduce social media conflicts among tweens.

Through education, orientation, and programs, Bolu-Steve et al. (2022) recommended that school counselors can help tweens recognize the risks connected with social media and peer pressure. School counselors must professionally raise awareness of the risks that improper usage of social media could have on tweens. Tinstman Jones et al. (2019) stated that school counselors could provide tweens with concrete examples, facilitate role plays, or create scenarios that show how to safely engage with others on social media platforms while using effective communication techniques. When used properly, social media platforms can give school counselors interesting cultural touchstones and valuable resources to support meaningful interactions, encourage the

development of social skills, and promote informed decision-making among their Black tween girls (Burt, 2018; Goodrich et al., 2020; Parnell, 2017).

Recommendation 3: Technology

Many researchers believe technology can be a valuable educational tool (Deslonde & Becerra, 2018; Serdyukov, 2017; Sung et al., 2016). However, school counselors must be innovative in how they use technology to deliver their comprehensive school counseling services (Abdillah et al., 2020). The promise of technology as a delivery method to boost the success of comprehensive school counseling programs is increasingly being discussed, rather than the technology itself, with a focus on the usage in school counseling (Steele et al., 2020). Due to school counselors' time restraints (Savitz-Romer et al., 2021), perceived usefulness also has an impact on technology uptake. The user's perception of how valuable a certain technology is to the ease of their job performance will determine their usage (Tarhini et al., 2015). Unfortunately, there are times when it is not possible for counselors to use technology to its full potential. (Glasheen & Campbell, 2009; Mason et al., 2018).

The DFT program was published in 2014 and limited in its technological reach due to the use of a CD-ROM to access the handouts for the program. Based on the study's findings, school counselors' perspectives on the needed improvements included recommendations for upgrading the program's technology. This concern will be raised with the publisher, who will be the recipient of this white paper, to seek options for this technology upgrade. It is apparent that the function of the school counselor can change daily and involve time spent on various duties that benefit students and school staff

(Mason et al., 2018). Nonetheless, intentionally and purposefully utilizing technology can strengthen the school counselor's ability to effectively serve all students, increase access to resources, and boost overall student success (Mason et al., 2018).

Conclusion

The white paper's recommended strategies can help improve the implementation of the DFT program while school counselors are working with Black tween girls. This white paper may prompt new discussions about the importance of fostering robust support systems for Black tween girls' and encouraging overall success, especially with behavior. Black adolescent girls are a significant population that is frequently ignored in schools due to colorblind perspectives and the complexity of numerous interlocking identities based on race and gender (Joseph et al., 2016). Consequently, Black girls are left to handle their issues independently as these issues go unnoticed, unaddressed, and unresolved. Research has discovered that school counselors could profoundly impact Black tween girls' lives by implementing a culturally appropriate program that fosters their gender and racial identity, thus improving their overall school experience (Cheng et al., 2020).

By implementing the recommendations of this white paper, Black tweens girls could establish better rapport with their school counselor and feel supported in the school environment (Aston et al., 2018; Fallon et al., 2022). Additionally, extending the support through mentorship opportunities, learning enhanced social media etiquette, and having access to the program through upgraded technology resources could create social change by providing the necessary tools for school counselors to foster a safe space and provide

a voice for their Black tween girls with the hope that this will, in turn help to decrease inappropriate behavior.

References

- Abdillah, H., Setyosari, P., Lasan, B., & Muslihati, M. (2020). The acceptance of school counselor in the use of ICT during school from home in the Covid-19 era. *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists*, 8(4), 1569–1582.
<https://doi.org/10.17478/804939>
- American School Counselor Association. (2019). *The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs* (4th ed.).
- American School Counselor Association. (2022, January). *ASCA research report: School counselors addressing racism and bias*.
<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/c8d94a64-fa33-4cad-ac07-224dc8e90195/2022-racism-bias-research-report.pdf>
- Annamma, S. A., Anyon, Y., Joseph, N. M., Farrar, J., Greer, E., Downing, B., & Simmons, J. (2019). Black girls and school discipline: The complexities of being overrepresented and understudied. *Urban Education*, 54(2), 211–242.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916646610>
- Aston, C., Graves, J. S. L., McGoey, K., Lovelace, T., & Townsend, T. (2018). Promoting sisterhood: The impact of a culturally focused program to address verbally aggressive behaviors in Black girls. *Psychology in the Schools*, 55(1), 50–62. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22089>
- Beasley, J. J. (2019). Girls' relational aggression: A small group intervention. *Professional School Counseling*, 23(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X20902099>

- Billingsley, J. T., Rivens, A. J., & Hurd, N. M. (2021). Family closeness and mentor formation among Black youth. *Journal of Child & Family Studies, 30*(3), 793–807. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-020-01895-y>
- Bolu-Steve, F. N., Omotayo, M. O., Adegoke, A. A., & Awoyemi, A. O. (2022). Influence of social media on in-school adolescents' morals: Implication for school counsellors. *E-Bangi, 19*(7), 161–170. <https://doi.org/10.17576/ebangi.2022.1907.13>
- Bostick, D., & Anderson, R. (2009). Evaluating a small-group counseling program: A model for program planning and improvement in the elementary setting. *Professional School Counseling, 12*(6), 428–432. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0901200602>
- Brar, R. (2022). Adolescents and social media: Tools to navigate life online. *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education, 14*(3), 9–13. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1350840.pdf>
- Brinkman, B. G., Marino, S., & Manning, L. (2018). Relationships are the heart of the work: Mentoring relationships within gender-responsive programs for Black girls. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy, 30*(4), 191–213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08952833.2018.1490618>
- Brookover, D. L., Hermann, M. A., & Deitz, M. E. (2021). School counseling through a developmental lens: Implications for working with adolescent girls. *Journal of School Counseling, 19*(43), Article n43. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1328850.pdf>

- Burt, I. (2018). Media's influence on self-image and romantic relationship decision-making in college-age clients: What mental health counselors should know. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 13*(3), 275–287.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2018.1426508>
- Casares, D. R., Jr., & Binkley, E. E. (2022). An unfiltered look at idealized images: A social media intervention for adolescent girls. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 17*(3), 313–331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2021.1892556>
- Cheng, Y.-J., Smith, L., Ritzi, R., Wagner, T., & Pertuit, T. L. (2020). Counselor preparation in working with African American adolescents in group counseling. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 45*(1), 3–21.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2019.1699620>
- DeMaria, A. N. (2020). Mentorship. *Structural Heart, 4*(6), 451–452.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/24748706.2020.1832407>
- Deslonde, V., & Becerra, M. (2018). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM): Exploring school counselors' acceptance and use of Naviance. *The Professional Counselor, 8*(4), 369–382. <https://doi.org/10.15241/vd.8.4.369>
- Dondero, G. M. (1997). Mentors: Beacons of hope. *Adolescence, 32*, 881–887.
- Fallon, L. M., DeFouw, E. R., Cathcart, S. C., Berkman, T. S., Robinson-Link, P., O'Keeffe, B. V., & Sugai, G. (2022). School-based supports and interventions to improve social and behavioral outcomes with racially and ethnically minoritized youth: A review of recent quantitative research. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 31*(1), 123–156. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10864-021-09436-3>

- Fuller, L. B., Hall-Sally, S., Clay, T., & Reeves, P. (2016). African American college women's reactions: A group program providing counseling and spiritual support. In T. Hicks (Ed.), *Spirituality research studies in higher education* (pp. 116–142). University Press of America.
- Glasheen, K., & Campbell, M. (2009). The use of online counselling within an Australian secondary school setting: A practitioner's viewpoint. *Counselling Psychology Review, 24*(2), 42–51.
- Goodrich, K. M., Kingsley, K. V., & Sands, H. C. (2020). Digitally responsive school counseling across the ASCA National Model. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 42*(2), 147–158. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-020-09396-9>
- Graves, S. L., Herndon-Sobalvarro, A., Nichols, K., Aston, C., Ryan, A., Blefari, A., Schutte, K., Schachner, A., Victoria, L., & Prier, D. (2017). Examining the effectiveness of a culturally adapted social emotional intervention for African American males in an urban setting. *School Psychology Quarterly, 32*(1), 62–74. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27124505/>
- Harper, E. A., James, A. G., Curtis, C., & Ramey, D. (2021). Using the participatory culture-specific intervention model to improve a Positive Youth Development program for African American adolescent girls. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation, 31*(1), 61–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2019.1652618>
- Hines, D. E., & Wilmot, J. M. (2018). From spirit-murdering to spirit-healing:

Addressing anti-Black aggressions and the inhumane discipline of Black children. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 20(2), 62–69.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2018.1447064>

Hoffman Marketing Communications. (2013). *How to write a white paper: A closer look at white paper definition*.

https://hoffmanmarcom.com/docs/Closer_Look_white_paper_definition.pdf

Joseph, N. M., Viesca, K. M., & Bianco, M. (2016). Black female adolescents and racism in schools: Experiences in a colorblind society. *The High School Journal*, 100(1), 4–25. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2016.0018>

Kaplan, J. S. (1995). *Beyond behavior modification: A cognitive-behavioral approach to behavior management in the school* (3rd ed.). Pro-Ed.

Kemp-Graham, K. Y. (2018). #BlackGirlsMatter: A case study examining the intersectionality of race, gender, and school discipline. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 21(3), 21–35.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458917741171>

Kull, R. M., Gretak, E. A., & Kosciw, J. G. (2019). *Supporting safe and healthy schools for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students: A national survey of school counselors, social workers, and psychologists*. GLSEN.

<https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2019->

[11/Supporting_Safe_and_Healthy_Schools_%20Mental_Health_Professionals_2019.pdf](https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Supporting_Safe_and_Healthy_Schools_%20Mental_Health_Professionals_2019.pdf)

Martin, G., & Pear, J. (2003). *Behavior modification: What it is and how to do it* (7th ed).

Prentice Hall.

- Mason, E. C. M., Griffith, C., & Belser, C. T. (2018). School counselors' use of technology for program management. *Professional School Counseling, 22*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X19870794>
- Mayes, R. D., Dollahide, C. T., & Young, A. (2018). School counselors as leaders in school turnaround. *Journal of Organizational & Educational Leadership, 4*(1), Article 3. https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/joel/vol4/iss1/3/?no_redirect=true
- Mayes, R. D., Lowery, K., Mims, L. C., & Rodman, J. (2021). "I stayed just above the cusp so I was left alone": Black girls' experiences with school counselors. *High School Journal, 104*(3), 131–154. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2021.0003>
- Morris, E. W., & Perry, B. L. (2017). Girls behaving badly? Race, gender, and subjective evaluation in the discipline of African American girls. *Sociology of Education, 90*(2), 127–148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040717694876>
- Parnell, J. (2017). Vlogging: A new phenomenon, but is it a concern for people's health? *Journal of Aesthetic Nursing, 6*(4), 196–198. <https://doi.org/10.12968/joan.2017.6.4.196>
- Savitz-Romer, M., Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., Nicola, T. P., Alexander, E., & Carroll, S. (2021). When the kids are not alright: School counseling in the time of COVID-19. *AERA Open, 7*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584211033600>
- Serdyukov, P. (2017). Innovation in education: What works, what doesn't, and what to do about it? *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning, 10*, 4–33.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIT-10-2016-0007>

Skinner, B. F. (1953). *Science and human behavior*. Macmillan.

Steele, T., Nuckols, G., & Stone, C. (2020). Technology trends in school counseling.

Journal of School Counseling, 18(10).

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1251792.pdf>

Steen, S. (2011). Academic and personal development through group work: An

exploratory study. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 36*(2), 129–143.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2011.562747>

Sung, Y.-T., Chang, K.-E., & Liu, T.-C. (2016). The effects of integrating mobile devices

with teaching and learning on students' learning performance: A meta-analysis

and research synthesis. *Computers & Education, 94*, 252–275.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2015.11.008>

Swank, J. M., Smith-Adcock, S., & Weaver, J. L. (2018). School counselors' roles and

responsibilities in bullying prevention: A national survey. *Professional School*

Counseling, 22(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X19851465>

Tarhini, A., Hone, K., & Liu, X. (2015). A cross-cultural examination of the impact of

social, organisational and individual factors on educational technology acceptance

between British and Lebanese university students: e-Learning acceptance in UK

and Lebanon. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 46*(4), 739-755.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12169>

Tinstman Jones, J. L., Campbell, L. O., Stickl Haugen, J., & Sutter, C. C. (2019).

Cyberbullying considerations for school counselors: A social media content

analysis. *Professional School Counseling*, 23(1), 2156759X2091936.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759x20919365>

Unroe, T., Barnett, R. V., & Payne-Purvis, C. (2017). An examination of self-esteem and empowerment of African American female youth in an after school program.

Journal of Youth Development, 11(3), 26–41.

<https://doi.org/10.5195/jyd.2016.458>

Will, M. (2021, July 29). When teachers and school counselors become informal mentors, students thrive. *Education Week*.

<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/when-teachers-and-guidance-counselors-become-informal-mentors-students-thrive/2021/07>

Williams, V. (2017). Making gender visible: Title IX and discriminatory school discipline. *Tennessee Journal of Race, Gender, & Social Justice*, 6(1), 67–82.

<https://ir.law.utk.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1103&context=rgsj>

Appendix B: Partnership Approval



The following research proposal was reviewed by the committee and approved for partnership:

Study Title: School Counselor's Perspective on Drama-Free Tweens Program for Black Tween Girls' Behavior

Principal Investigator: Linda Poindexter

Organization: Walden University

Faculty Advisor, if applicable: Dr. Leslie VanGelder

Type of Research Collaboration: Collection of New Data


IRB Approval? Yes

Research Abstract: The problem of this project study is that there was an increase in discipline infractions during the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school years among Black six-grade tween girls. The numbers indicated a 44% increase in discipline infractions over a 4-year period. The purpose of this basic qualitative study is to explore school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the Drama-Free Tweens (DFT) program on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting. The DFT program is a small-group program designed to assist school counselors with their tweens' inappropriate behavior and assist with success in the school setting. Purposeful sampling will be used to select approximately 10-12 school counselors that have used the DFT program among their tweens. Data will be collected

using semistructured one-hour interviews and Zoom/in-person interviews will be thematically analyzed to produce emergent themes. These findings may support positive social change by exploring school counselors ' perspectives on the needed improvements of the DFT program for Black tween girls' behavior in schools.

Committee Recommendation: The committee recommends this study for approval.

Superintendent's Approval:



Signature of Superintendent



Printed name of Superintendent

12-6-22

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. How did you get involved with the DFT small counseling group program?
2. What behavioral changes, if any, did you see in the Black tween girls with whom you were working that you think were a result of using the DFT?
3. What successes did you have with the DFT program for your Black tween girl's behavior in your school setting? (Please describe some examples)
4. What have been the most challenging part implementing the DFT program for you?
5. In what ways do you envision that the DFT program be improved to better help your Black tween girl's behavior?
6. What additional resources could help improve the DFT program?

Appendix D: Audit Trail of Study Procedures

Steps	Description
Step 1: Determine what to research	The researcher sought to explore school counselors' perspectives on the successes, challenges, and the needed improvements of the DFT programs on Black tween girls' behavior in the school setting.
Step 2: Identifying how to research the identified problem	This step involved looking through secondary data and research including research reports and studies carried out previously. The methodology to use was also determined, which was the basic qualitative research design approach. Semistructured interviews with open-ended questions were selected for collection of data.
Step 3: Writing up a research plan	Research plan written. It provides more information regarding the timelines, goals of the research, dependencies, and participant scope.
Step 4: Preparing the research	This was done by selecting the participants, scheduling interviews and preparing Zoom meetings and the necessary equipment
Step 5: Executing the research	This was accomplished within a period of roughly six months. Interviews were conducted with eight participants online via Zoom. The data were recorded using the default Zoom voice recorder. Notes were taken using pen and paper for backup. Follow-up questions were asked during each interview
Step 6: Coding and synthesizing the data to find insights	Thematic analysis was the approach used to code the data with the assistance of NVivo 12 software. Themes were found that resulted in the generation of insight which helped to answer the research questions and achieve the goal of the study.
Step 7: Create research output	This was a report outlining major findings from the study in a document format. It encompassed an executive summary, insight themes, as well as supporting evidence.
Step 8: Sharing the findings with key stakeholders	Important records are kept with regard to what the researcher did during the research. These include information on how the data collection instrument was developed; all raw data and notes taken during each semistructured interview; notes pertaining to the validity and reliability of the study; and codebook showing a listing of all the codes/frequencies that were used in the data analysis process.