

The background of the slide is a blurred photograph of a large crowd of people, likely at a public event or rally. The colors are warm, with shades of orange, red, and brown, suggesting a sunset or indoor lighting. The text is overlaid on this background.

Unlocking Greatness:

Shifting our Perception of Mentoring Black and Latino Boys

Presented by Earl J. Edwards

Agenda

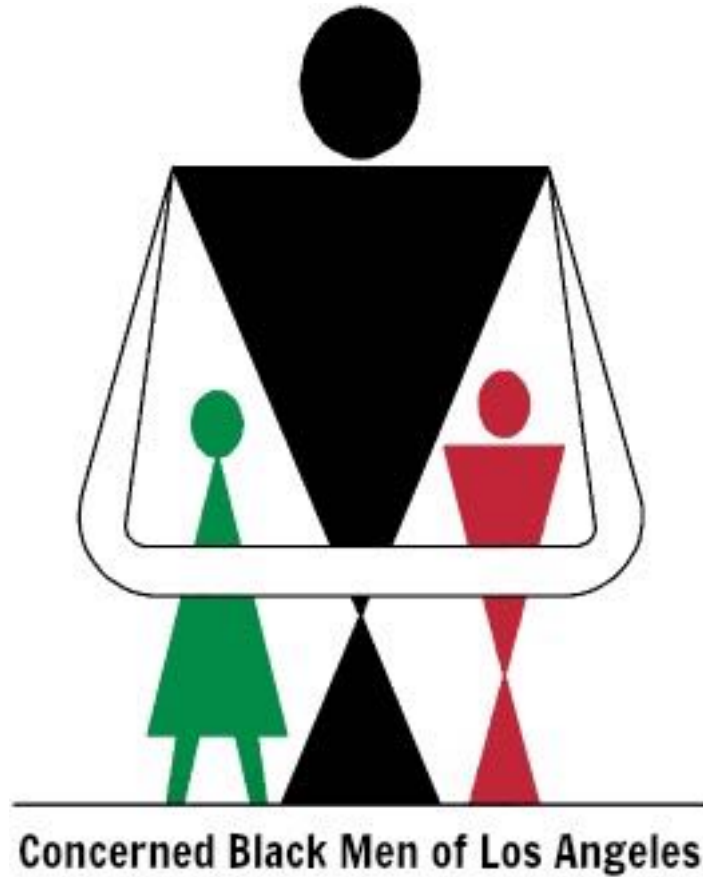


- ◎ **Who am I? What is my why? (10 min)**
- ◎ **The Narrative of our Black and Brown Young Men (10 min)**
- ◎ **The Counter Narrative (15 min)**
- ◎ **Breaking Barriers through Mentorship (50 min)**
- ◎ **Wrap-up (10 min)**

Teacher



SCHOLAR & ADVOCATE



Mentor





The Dominant Narrative



How does it feel to be a problem?

The Soul of Black Folks, 1903

W.E.B. Dubois



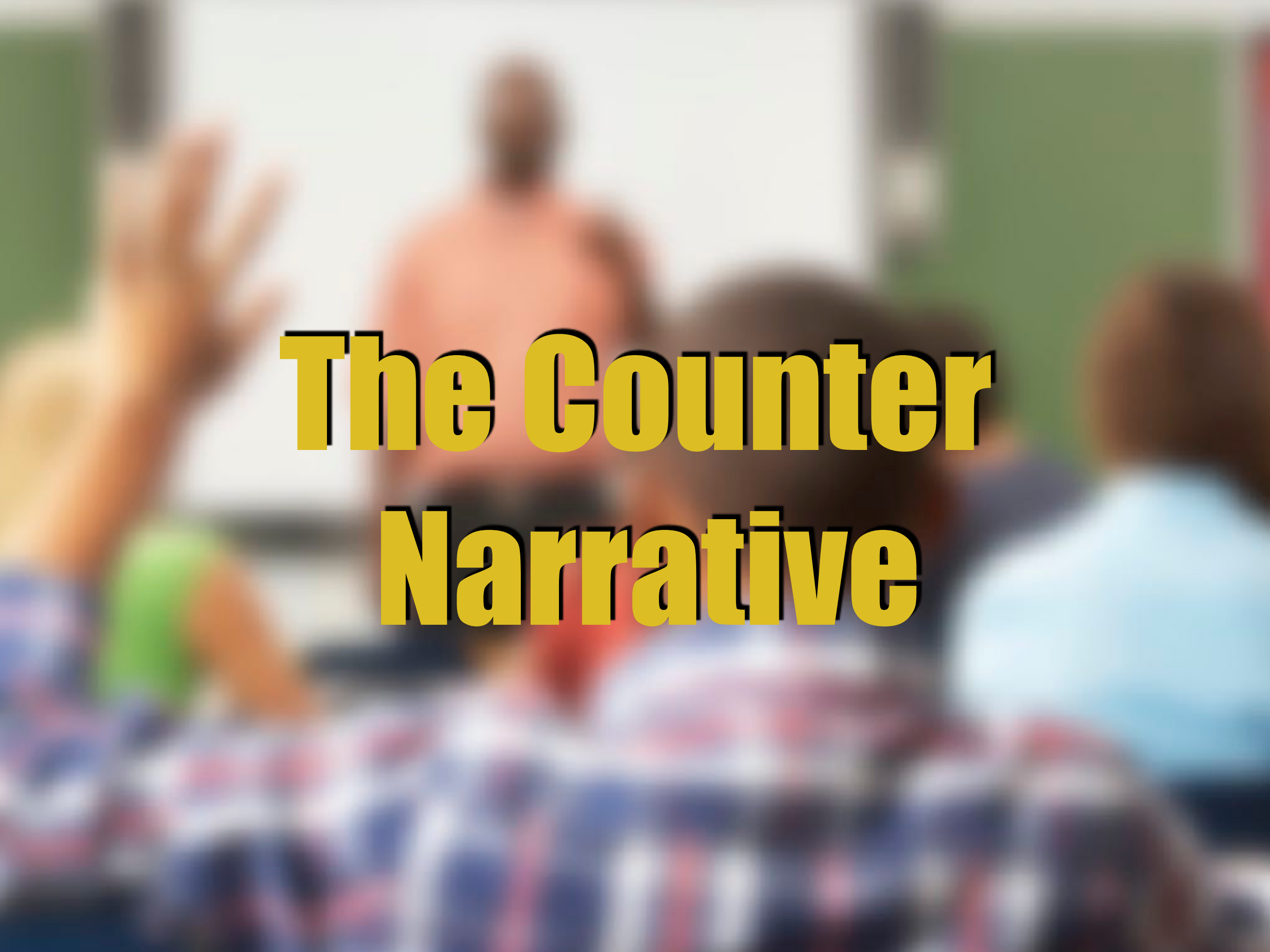
What are some stereotypes of Black and Latino Men?

**Join at
slido.com
#Mentor**

Table Discussion

- How are young African American and Latino men perceived in our society?
- How do you think society's perception affects young Black and Latino men?
- How does mentorship play a factor in supporting our young men?





The Counter Narrative

SUCCEEDING IN THE CITY

A Report from the New York City Black and Latino Male High School Achievement Study



Graduate School of Education
Penn GSE
Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education



THE COUNTER NARRATIVE

Reframing Success of High Achieving
Black and Latino Males in Los Angeles County



hardworking

determined

leader

outgoing

funny

respectful

serious

ambitious

brave

self-motivated

overachiever

athletic

curious

independent

smart

responsible

persistent

artistic

hard

fun

adaptable

perseverance

intelligent

diligent

caring

hopeful

tenacious

strong

work

positive

motivated

influential

young

articulate

happy

optimistic

back

resilient

kick

punctual

learn

wisdom

nice

best

kind

helpful

scholarly

model

role

successful

charismatic

determination

care

self-discipline

bright

playful

understanding

courage

working around

male

humble

driven

successful

friendly

efficient

Achievement Gap



Achievement Gap



Opportunity Gap



SOURCES: Hofferth and Sandberg (2000) / Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) / Barnett and Nores (2012) / Barnett, et al. (2012) / Wimer, et al. (2002); Afterschool Alliance (2013) / Gutiérrez , K. D., et al. (2010) / Wimer, et al. (2006) / McLaughlin & Pitcock (2009) / Meyer, D., et al. (2004) / Institute of Museum and Library Services (2008) / Balfanz, R. (2009) / PBS Frontline, (2012)

A ROLE MODEL IS...

- Someone who is looked up to and whose behavior and success people try to replicate.



A MENTOR IS...

- **Someone who is looked up to and whose behavior and success people try to replicate.**
- **Someone who uses their social and cultural capital to mitigate barriers for those whom they support.**
- **Someone who advocates for opportunities for those whom they support.**

A MENTOR IS...

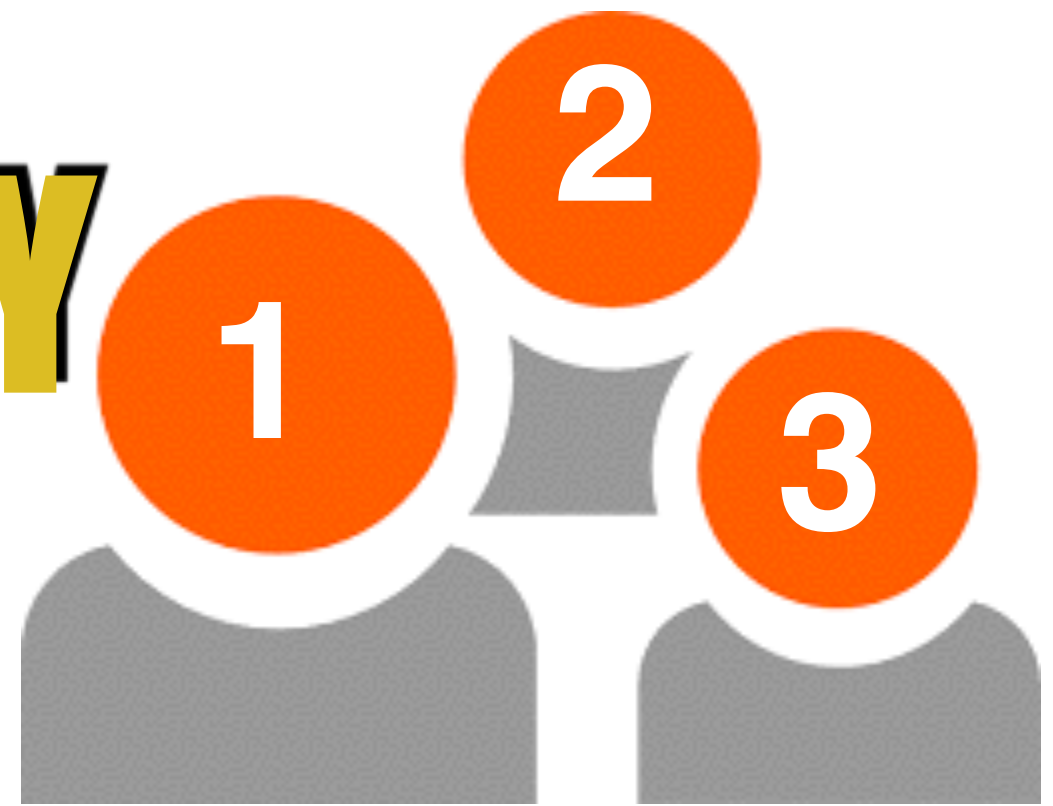
- Someone who is looked up to and whose behavior and success people try to replicate.
- **Someone who uses their social and cultural capital to mitigate barriers for those whom they support.**
- Someone who advocates for opportunities for those whom they support.

A MENTOR IS...

- **Someone who is looked up to and whose behavior and success people try to replicate.**
- **Someone who uses their social and cultural capital to mitigate barriers for those whom they support.**
- **Someone who advocates for opportunities for those whom they support.**

**How can we break barriers for
our Black and Brown Young Men?**

TRIAD ACTIVITY



Directions:

1. Break-up into triads
2. Assign each triad member a number between 1-3.
3. Each member will be given a 3 minutes to discuss the young man/men they mentor and barriers their mentees face.
4. After the initial 3 minutes, the whole triad will discuss ways in which the mentor can mitigate barriers.

AN EXAMPLE:

My Mentees

Bright, motivated young men that wanted to improve their family and community circumstances.

Barriers

High school had low 4-year college acceptance rates.

Students did not have any access to college.

School did not offer leadership opportunities.



MALE LEADERS OF ALVAREZ

Breaking College Access Barriers

We attended community service opportunities and visited colleges.

I found them local tutors through my fraternity.

I became an official college recommender for my mentees.



AN EXAMPLE:

My Mentees

Charismatic, social,
academically strong, self-
motivated, and family oriented.

Barriers

No job experience as a high
school student.

Did not have access to a
career network.



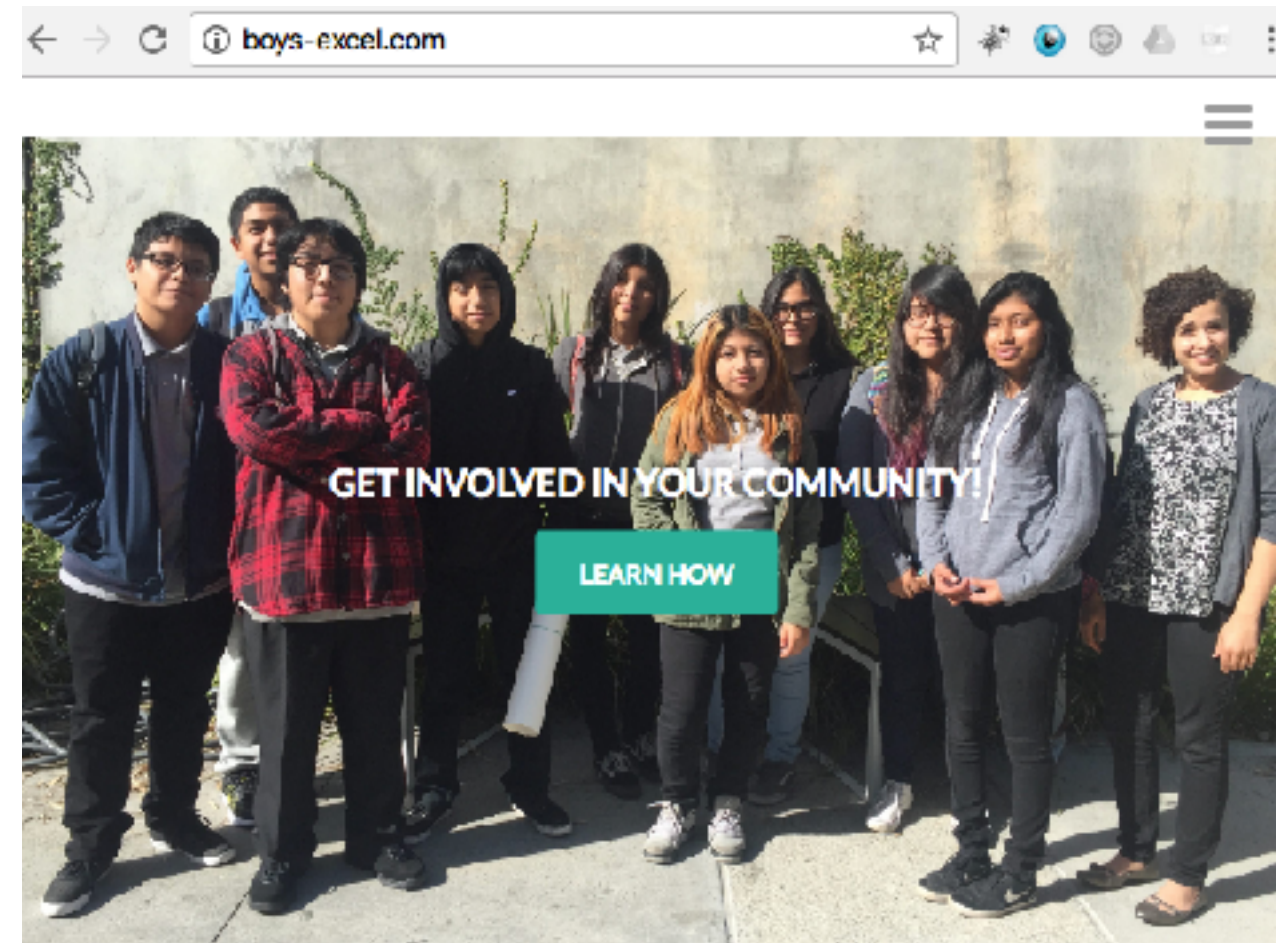
AN EXL INTERNSHIP:

Breaking Employment Barriers

I established an internship creating websites.

I taught my mentee how to make websites.

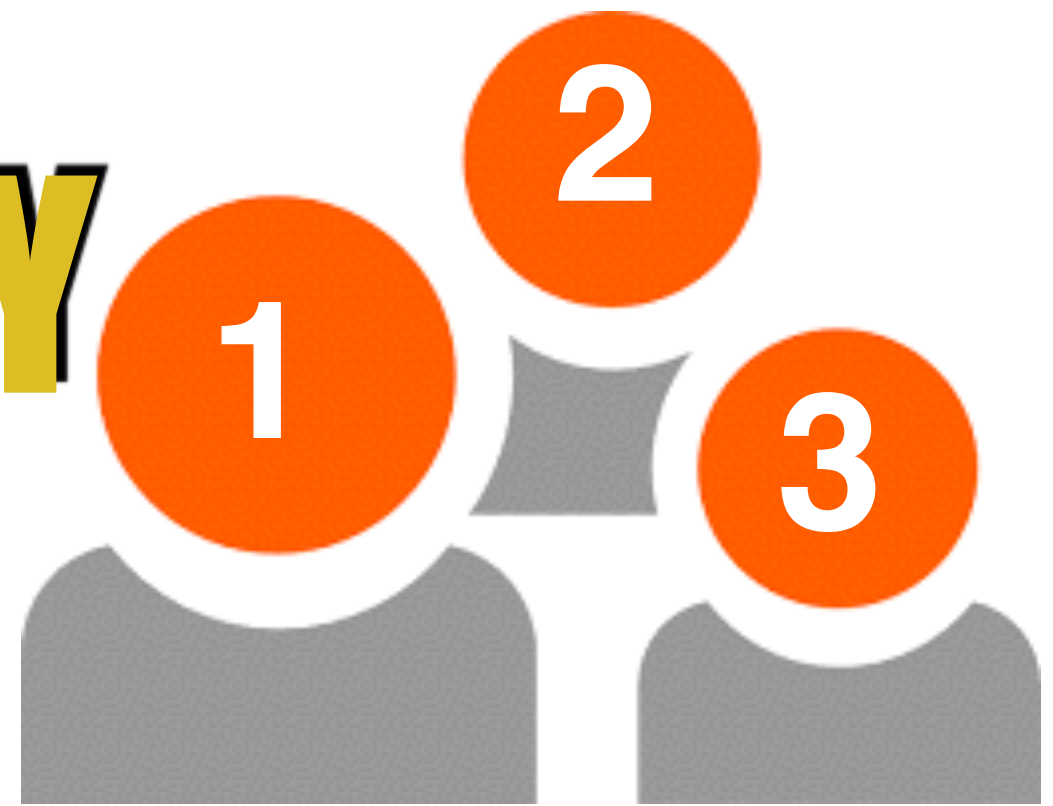
He was able to present his websites to my district leaders.



Hello,

My name is Jonathan Vasquez and I'm currently in 12th grade at the CNHS Miramar Campus. I've been attending Camino for a little over 11 years and created this website in order to make it easier for students to get involved in their school or

TRIAD ACTIVITY



Directions:

1. Break-up into triads
2. Assign each triad member a number between 1-3.
3. Members will each be given 3 minutes to discuss the young man/men they mentor and to highlight the **barriers** their mentees face.
4. After the initial 3 minutes, the whole triad will discuss ways in which the mentor can mitigate barriers for 3 minutes.

What are some of strong traits of the young men you mentor?

What are some of the specific barriers they are facing?

Member #1



**How can the mentee's
structural problems be
mitigated?**

Whole Group



What are some of strong traits of the young men you mentor?

What are some of the specific barriers they are facing?

Member #2



**How can the mentee's
structural problems be
mitigated?**

Whole Group



What are some of the strong traits of the young men you mentor?

What are some of the specific barriers they are facing?

Member #3



**How can the mentee's
structural problems be
mitigated?**

Whole Group



Design a New Mentoring Opportunity

- In groups of 6, design your own Mentoring Opportunity.
- Use the chart paper to highlight how your opportunity will address the **tangible needs of your mentees. (15 min)**



Design a Mentoring Opportunity

Mentee Demographic:

Structural Barrier Addressed:

Key Mentoring Features:

Social Capital Used:

How would you measure success?



Share Out



KEY TAKE-AWAYS

“ The core of equity: understanding who your kids are and how to meet their needs. You are still focused on outcomes, but the path to get there may not be the same for each one. ”

Pedro Noguera, Ph.D.

“ We are all products of someone else’s expectations. ”

Tyrone Howard, Ph.D.

Thank You!

Contact Information

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SUCCEEDING IN THE CITY

A Report from the New York City Black and Latino Male High School Achievement Study



Graduate School of Education
PennGSE
Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education

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Open Society Foundations generously funded this report and the 40-school research study on which it is based.

Opinions expressed herein belong entirely to the authors and do not necessarily represent viewpoints of Open Society Foundations, the New York City Department of Education, or the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania.

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ON THE FRONT COVER:

Edgar Emmanuel Torres (sophomore, Ursinus College) and **Lasana Ian Williams** (sophomore Siena College), 2012 graduates of Essex Street Academy.

This report can be downloaded in PDF (at no cost) from www.gse.upenn.edu/equity/nycReport

MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR

I begin with a plea to the nation: please stop mischaracterizing young men of color as hopeless thugs who care nothing about their education, communities, and futures. Ways in which Black and Latino male teens, especially those who reside in America's largest cities, are persistently portrayed in media and elsewhere negatively affect society's expectations of them and, at times, their expectations of themselves. Visions of them in urban high schools are almost universally negative – they are expected to be the perpetrators of school violence and at the bottom of every statistical metric of educational excellence. Viewing these young men through deficit-colored lenses sustains a depressing, one-sided narrative about their social and educational outlook. They deserve to be seen differently, hence the purpose of this study.

This report is the first publication from the New York City Black and Latino Male High School Achievement Study, a project that entailed individual interviews with 415 students from 40 public high schools – 90 were enrolled in 44 colleges and universities, the rest were college-bound high school juniors and seniors. Understanding how these young men succeeded in and out of school, developed college aspirations, became college-ready, and navigated their ways to postsecondary education was the primary aim of this project. Instead of further amplifying deficits and documenting failures in urban schools, 12 Black and Latino male researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and I chose to study students who figured out how to foster productive relationships, resist pressures to join gangs and drop out of high school, and succeed in environments cyclically disadvantaged by structural inequities. Albeit important, we decided against studying factors that lead to underachievement and alarmingly high dropout rates. More interesting to us were the positive effects of families, communities, teachers, school leaders, and educational policies and practices on student achievement. We believed more could be learned about high school success in urban contexts from young men who have actually been successful, as opposed to their lower-performing peers who are repeatedly the focus of social science and educational research. Some of what

we learned is presented herein.

This 40-school study was made possible through a grant from the Open Society Foundations. I am grateful that Shawn Dove deemed our research worthy of investment. I also appreciate the myriad ways Julian Cohen, Joshua Thomases, Victoria Crispin, Michelle Paladino, Noel De La Rosa, and others at the NYC Department of Education supported this project. I am especially indebted to Paul Forbes, Director of the Expanded Success Initiative, for his help and amazing partnership at every juncture in this experience. I also recognize Shawn K. Hill, Jonathan Berhanu, Wayne Thomas Wilson Jr., Carlos Burgos, Joyce Cook, Coral Haas, Susan Scheerbaum, Leonor Tendido, and Dr. Michael D. Hannon for their assistance. Executing this study with such excellence and efficiency would have been impossible without the 12 Penn GSE researchers who traveled with me to NYC each week for data collection and devoted their summer to data analysis. Their names are listed on Page 40. Fond memories of our extraordinary teamwork will gratify me for the rest of my career.

Above all, I proudly salute the 415 Black and Latino male students who participated in this study – their educational trajectories are inspiring, instructive, and praiseworthy. My teammates and I are beyond grateful for the access each young man gave us to his life and his willingness to share strategies that will undoubtedly help improve rates of success for others like him. I am proud of who they are and inspired by the extraordinary college-educated men they are destined to become. No one has taught me more about high school achievement and succeeding in the city than them.

Thank you for taking time to read this report; feel free to share it with others who may find it interesting and useful. Please direct your questions, feedback,

and reactions to our team at equity@gse.upenn.edu. I hope this report inspires you to see young men of color and the urban schools they attend differently.

Warmest regards,

Professor Shaun R. Harper, Ph.D.

Director

Center for the Study of Race and Equity
in Education, University of Pennsylvania

The New York City Black and Latino Male High School Achievement Study is Dr. Harper's second major research project on successful young men of color. His National Black Male College Achievement Study, which included students attending 42 colleges and universities in 20 states, remains the largest-ever qualitative study of Black undergraduate men. A report from that project is also available on the Center's website.





Chancellor Walcott leads a system of more than 1,700 public schools with 1.1 million students, 136,000 employees, and a \$23 billion budget. Building on Mayor Bloomberg's Children First reforms, Chancellor Walcott is committed to cultivating teacher talent, expanding school choices for families so that students attend schools that best meet their individual needs, creating strong partnerships with parents, and preparing students to graduate from high school and succeed in college and careers.

MESSAGE FROM CHANCELLOR DENNIS M. WALCOTT

Over the last decade, under the leadership of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, we have transformed the educational landscape in New York City. Since 2002, we have increased options for students and families by opening 656 new small schools and creating 126,000 new seats for students. The overall four-year graduation rate has steadily risen to 65% since 2005, including for Black and Latino young men.

Presented in this report are major findings from a comprehensive qualitative study of young men of color in 40 New York City high schools. It identifies enablers of their academic success and furthers our commitment – through the Expanded Success Initiative – to examining what truly works to graduate college and career ready Black and Latino students. Through schools participating in our Expanded Success Initiative, we will learn even more ways to dramatically increase outcomes for these and other students.

Thirteen researchers from the University of Pennsylvania interviewed over 400 students who have risen up in their communities and explored how our schools played a role in shaping who these young men are and will become. Participants in this study (mostly high school juniors and seniors when they were interviewed) were young students in our early childhood classrooms when the mayoral administration began in 2002. The young men in this study stand out as beneficiaries of the bold efforts we started then, having benefited from new autonomies granted to school leaders who were empowered to make school-level decisions about curriculum, culture, and hiring. As these young men progressed through middle school and into high school, they benefited from greater school choice.

When these young men applied to high school, the overwhelming majority of their families selected small schools – 37 of the 40 Expanded Success Initiative schools serve fewer than 600 students. They chose to join communities that would recognize who they were and, more importantly, would invest in their potential. These schools

ranged in contemporary themes, from science and sports management, to law enforcement and performing arts. Regardless of the theme of their school, these successful young men joined educational environments that nurtured their learning, resilience, and curiosity. We are now seeing them grow into leaders, problem solvers, and critical thinkers, in part because their schools cultivated their academic and personal behaviors. Additionally, through the Common Core, schools are raising academic standards so that even more students enter college and careers prepared with the skills to succeed.

We still have a lot to accomplish on behalf of the extraordinary Black and Latino male students who participated in this study. We owe it to them to strengthen our mission and continue our efforts to graduate more students who are college and career ready. Although this publication only captures a small segment of our progress in New York City, I share the report with great pride and as an introduction to these talented young men who will become our future innovators, visionaries, and leaders.

Sincerely,

Dennis M. Walcott

Chancellor

New York City Department of Education

MESSAGE FROM THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

When the Open Society Foundations launched the Campaign for Black Male Achievement in 2008 to address the economic, political, social, and educational exclusion of Black men and boys from the American mainstream, it was clear to the Campaign's leadership that we could not successfully advance a vision for Black male achievement without investing in efforts that promote educational equity and ensure Black boys are afforded opportunities to excel academically, to prepare for college, and to learn skills essential for productive lives and careers. What was also crystal clear to us was that we needed to be intentional in approaching our strategy with an asset-based mindset and messaging. Contrary to much of the public discourse, our vision for the work has been rooted in an understanding that there is nothing "wrong" with Black boys in America, and that it is indeed misguided policies and inequitable practices that fuel racial disparities in public education.

In 2011, when the opportunity was presented to the Open Society Foundations to partner with Bloomberg Philanthropies and the City of New York to launch the Young Men's Initiative (YMI) – the nation's most comprehensive effort to improve life outcomes for Black and Latino young men across several key indicators – we were especially excited about the Expanded Success Initiative (ESI) component of YMI. The prospect of demonstrating how to increase the college and career readiness of thousands of Black and Latino young men in 40 public high schools across New York City clearly aligned with our risk-taking, entrepreneurial approach to grantmaking.

Recycling hopeless, deficit narratives about young men of color and the schools they attend does not offer solutions for the philanthropic sector to invest in or promote. This is why I am absolutely thrilled about the report you are reading and will hopefully share widely. Led by the brilliant and insightful approach of Dr. Shaun R. Harper, along with his team of researchers from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, this report seeks to reveal what winning looks like for over 400 Black and Latino young men who attended the 40 ESI high

schools. What you are about to read reflects the vision, values, and fortitude of students who reveal to the nation how they were able to change the odds of their educational trajectories. What we learn from these young men should be promoted and reinforced in not only school districts across America, but in the collective consciousness of teachers, administrators, policymakers, researchers, parents, and others who care about the educational success of our nation's Black and Latino young men.

The Open Society Foundations is grateful for Dr. Harper's work and truly appreciates that he saw fit to put a dozen Black and Latino male researchers in front of the 415 young men who were interviewed for this study. We are also thankful for our partners at the NYC Department of Education and Fund for Public Schools who are all going the extra mile to ensure that ESI will have a historic impact on demonstrating how to increase the college and career readiness of Black and Latino male high school graduates. And while we have only completed the first full school year of ESI, it is not too early to acknowledge the leadership of the Open Society Foundations U.S. Programs, which has elevated expectations in the field of philanthropy about what it means to boldly respond to how America views, values, and invests in Black boys and other young men of color.

Through the Campaign for Black Male Achievement and our ongoing support of the NYC Young Men's Initiative (including ESI), the Open Society Foundations will maintain a firm commitment to confronting what we have identified as a formidable challenge to an open society. Our investment in projects that improve the lives of young men of color sends a critical signal to our society that we cannot exclude and subjugate broad segments of our citizenry without damaging democracy and open society values for all. Fortunately, this report advances these same values. I therefore applaud its authors and the

415 Black and Latino male students on whom it is based.

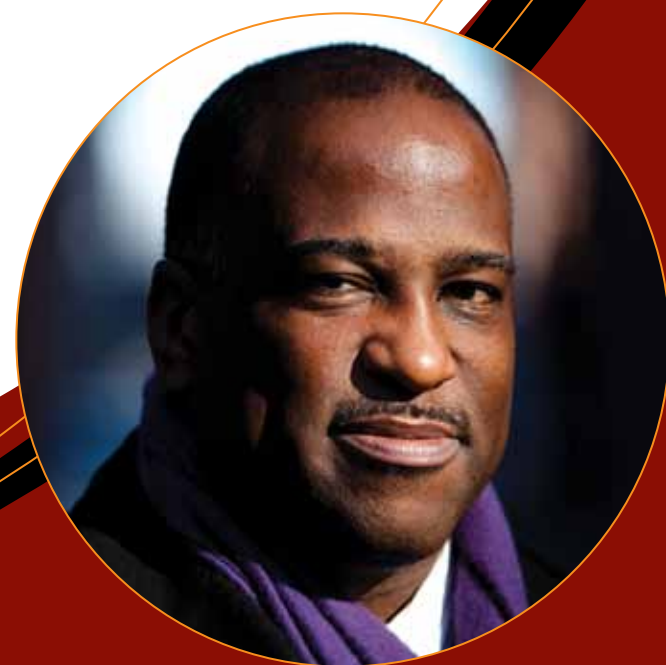
Many blessings,

Shawn Dove

Manager

Campaign for Black Male Achievement
Open Society Foundations U.S. Programs

Shawn Dove joined the Open Society Foundations in 2008 to launch and lead the Campaign for Black Male Achievement. He has over 25 years of youth development, education, and community-building experience designing and managing national and local programs, including serving as one of the first leaders of New York City's Beacon Schools movement during his tenure with the Harlem Children's Zone.



PUTTING STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER STAGE

Launched by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg in 2011, the NYC Young Men's Initiative (YMI) is a multidimensional effort that aims to address education, health, criminal justice, and employment disparities that disproportionately affect Black and Latino males. More than \$43 million in annual investments from public and private sources fund YMI.



YOUNG MEN OF COLOR IN URBAN SCHOOLS

Beyond Deficit Narratives and Depressing Statistics

Their futures are hopeless. All but a few will remain trapped in generational cycles of poverty and crime-infested neighborhoods. Their lazy, drug-addicted, government-dependent single parents care little about their schooling. Consequently, they inherit from their families and communities a staunch carelessness for learning and educational attainment. More appealing to them are guns, gangs, fast money, and one pair of career options (either becoming rappers or professional athletes). They are to be feared, stopped and frisked, and mass incarcerated, as they are the antithesis of law-abiding citizens. When they show up to school (which isn't very often), administrators and teachers should expect them to be disengaged, disrespectful, unprepared, underperforming, and violent. For sure, they are most likely to drop out of high school and least likely to enroll in college. This caricature of young men of color in urban contexts is both pervasive and longstanding. It also is one-sided, terribly racist, and far from universal.

"The careful and strategic construction of Black males as jesters, clowns, entertainers, sex-crazed brutes, violent hustlers, and law-breaking thugs was centuries in the making" (Howard, Flenbaugh, & Terry, 2012, p. 98). Brown (2011) discovered that the same pathological narrative about Black men has been recycled in social science and educational research since the 1930s. Similarly, despite tremendous diversity among them, Noguera and Hurtado (2012) maintain that Latino men are routinely imagined, researched, and misrepresented in ways that are dehumanizing and monolithic. They also acknowledge an imbalance in the literature on men of color. Accordingly, in comparison to scholarship on Black American men, considerably less has been published about Latino men in U.S. social contexts. But like their Black counterparts, what has been written about Latino men is one-dimensional, almost entirely negative.

Doom and gloom statistics about these two groups are seemingly endless; there are surely enough to fill these 40 pages and dozens (perhaps hundreds) of books. Because

this report is about Black and Latino male student success, not much space is devoted to rehashing depressing data – in fact, we do so only in these two pages. Here are a half dozen troubling statistics about young men of color and the schools they attend:

- Based on their analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education's Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey, Sáenz and Ponjuan (2011) report that 49.5% of Black and 29.6% of Latino male students in grades 6-12 had been suspended from school, compared to 21.3% of their White male peers. Furthermore, Black boys had been expelled at a rate 13 times higher than that of White boys.
- In comparison to their same-race female peers and White students, young men of color are more often misdiagnosed and overrepresented in special education. For example, the representation of Black boys in special education (excluding gifted and talented programs) is more than twice their representation in the overall public school population (Thomas & Stevenson, 2009).
- Of 12,532 respondents to the National Crime Victimization Survey School Crime Supplement, 47.2% of Black and 43.2% of Latino students were more than twice as likely than were White students to report that gangs were present at their schools (Toldson, 2011). Over 90% of students in the sample attended public schools.
- Nationally, 52% of Black and 58% of Latino males graduated in four years from high schools where they began as ninth graders, compared to 78% of their White male classmates (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012). In 38 states and the District of Columbia, high school graduation rates for Black males were lowest among

both sexes and all racial groups. Rates for Latino men were lowest in 11 states.

- Across all postsecondary degree levels (from associate's through doctoral), women enroll in higher numbers and earn degrees at rates higher than their male counterparts; these sex gaps are more pronounced for Black and Latino students than they are for other racial groups. In 2011, 36.9% of Black undergraduates at U.S. colleges and universities were men, and male students comprised 42.3% of Latino undergraduate enrollments (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Moreover, women earned 64.9% of associate's degrees and 63.4% of bachelor's degrees awarded to Black and Latino students in 2011.
- Across four cohorts of Black male undergraduates at public four-year colleges and universities, 33.3% earned bachelor's degrees within six years from the institutions at which they started as freshmen, compared to 48.1% of students overall (Harper & Harris, 2012). Black men's college completion rates are lowest among both sexes and all racial groups in U.S. higher education.

DEFICIT-ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- ▶ How does family dysfunction affect Black and Latino male student achievement in school?
- ▶ What makes young men of color so apathetic and unmotivated at school?
- ▶ Why are Black and Latino male teens so easily lured into gangs, drug trafficking, and other criminal activities?
- ▶ Why are Black and Latino men so underrepresented in college and overrepresented in prisons?
- ▶ Why are generations of Black and Latino families trapped in urban ghettos and seemingly inescapable cycles of poverty?

ANTI-DEFICIT REFRAMING

- ▶ How do these students maintain academic focus despite chaos in their homes?
- ▶ What strategies engage young men of color and make them excited about learning?
- ▶ How do these teens effectively resist pressures to join gangs and commit crimes?
- ▶ Fact: There are considerably more 18-24 year old Black and Latino men in college than in prison – what made higher education more appealing to them?
- ▶ What inspires young men from low-income neighborhoods to see beyond their present condition?

These statistics and countless others presented in policy reports, academic journals, news stories, and elsewhere paint a grim national portrait of Black and Latino men's status in the U.S. education system. But the situation in urban contexts, including New York City, is often worse. For example, NYC has the sixth largest Black-White male gap in four-year high school graduation rates among urban districts that enroll 10,000 or more Black male students (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012). In a recent report, Villavicencio, Bhattacharya, and Guidry (2013) provide data specific to Black and Latino male students in NYC public schools. These three data points are among the statistics published in their report:

- Among Black and Latino males who entered high school in 2006, 59.3% and 56.9%, respectively, graduated within four years. Villavicencio et al. note this was a 14 percentage point increase over students who entered in the 2002 cohort and graduated four years later. Despite these gains, gaps still existed between young men of color and other students in the graduating class of 2010. Seventy percent of Black women, two-thirds of Latinas, and 78.3% of White male students graduated from NYC public high schools within four years.
- Only 9.3% of Black and 11.4% of Latino men who entered high school in 2006 were deemed "college ready" four years later. Villavicencio et al. also highlight racial and sex differences in readiness. One metric they used was the percent of high school students who graduated with a New York State Advanced Regents Diploma. Accordingly, graduating with this type of diploma ensures that students will not be required to take remedial courses at four-year colleges and universities. Only 6.2% of Black males and nine percent of Latino males graduated in 2010 with Advanced Regents Diplomas, compared to 10.6% of Black female students, 10.9% of Latinas, and 34.3% of White men.
- The rate at which students enroll in college within six years of beginning high school is another area in which Villavicencio et al. found inequities. There was a 12.6 percentage point difference between Black men and Black women (46.1% vs. 58.7%) and a 9.8 percent gap

between Latino men and their same-race female peers (45.9% vs. 55.7%). Comparatively, 68% of White men who started high school as freshmen in 2006 enrolled in college by 2012. Villavicencio et al.'s data also reveal that Black and Latino male graduates of NYC public high schools are considerably less likely than are their White and Asian American classmates to enroll in four-year postsecondary institutions.

We are not arguing in this report that these statistics are anything short of alarming or are unworthy of exposure, serious conversations, and bold interventions. Even if we tried to somehow disregard these trends, researchers, journalists, and others would not let us. To be sure, we feel these numbers should outrage anyone who cares about equitable schooling and a just society. However, our argument is that there is another side of the story that, at this point, is much more instructive than focusing entirely on failures. For instance, we have chosen to see some educational possibility in the national Latino male high school graduation statistic – instead of repeatedly asking why 42% did not complete high school within four years, exploring what factors enabled 58% of them to graduate on time seemed sensible and important. In the side bar on this page are examples of other commonly asked questions about young men of color that we chose to rewrite in an anti-deficit fashion.



ABOUT THE EXPANDED SUCCESS INITIATIVE

The New York City Department of Education's Expanded Success Initiative (ESI) uses innovative approaches to tackle the educational achievement gap and increase the number of Black and Latino young men who graduate high school prepared to succeed in college and careers. ESI is one component of the Office of the Mayor's Young Men's Initiative (YMI) and is supported by Open Society Foundations. YMI is the nation's most comprehensive effort to address education, health, criminal justice, and employment disparities that disproportionately affect Black and Latino males.

ESI was launched in 2012 with a competitive design challenge for public high schools across the City. Forty schools that submitted the most compelling design plans were selected to receive capacity-building grants over a three-year period. In each school, at least 35% of students are Black and Latino males, and 60% or more qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Grants enable school leaders and teachers to create and implement practices to achieve coherence within three interrelated areas:

Academic Rigor

These strategies relate to Common Core standards and expectations for what students must know and demonstrate in each grade to be on track for college success. For example, schools can opt to redesign course curricula to increase the number of students enrolled in four years of math and science, Advanced Placement, and other rigorous college-level courses.

Youth Development

These strategies emphasize building student resilience, commitment to life beyond high school, and restorative approaches to school discipline that prevent negative outcomes, like suspension. For example, the 40 selected schools possess structures where adults use a strengths-based approach in their interactions with students, provide social and emotional support, and communicate clear behavioral expectations and high standards for college and career readiness.

School Culture

These strategies promote a college and career focus among Black and Latino male students, influencing the ethos, mission, and explicit (and implicit) communications in the entire school building. For example, strategies include workshops for students to develop their interests; opportunities for students to acquire skills outside the classroom; chances to join a variety of extra-curricular offerings; options to participate in academically aligned internships and workplace experiences; and a commitment to giving students and their families a clear voice within the school.

This three-pronged ESI model encompasses shifts in academic programming, instructional delivery, development of students' aspirations and goal commitments, and strengthening cultural competence and expectations for student success among educators. Moreover, embedding college-going cultures in each school is an important component of the model.

ESI schools are provided frequent data snapshots to shine light on the progress of Black and Latino male students over time. The implementation of ESI is being researched, formally evaluated, and documented so that its successful practices can be replicated and scaled. Professional learning, development, and sharing – within and across the 40 school sites – are also important features of the Initiative.

ESI schools represent the benefits of sweeping changes in NYC over the last decade. Thirty-seven are "small schools" that serve fewer than 500 students, where every person in the building is well known. They also enroll students who enter below grade level, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and first generation college-bound students. These schools are well positioned to develop new strategies that raise the bar for Black and Latino male success in urban education. The return on investment will be more broadly felt

as lessons learned from the Initiative influence broader citywide goals of increased college and career readiness and equitable rates of postsecondary educational attainment.

Lastly, ESI is developing a breakthrough high school model – its success will be measured by college and career outcomes of the Black and Latino students it will serve. The ESI school model builds from the success of small schools that have made a large contribution to increasing high school graduation rates, especially for Black and Latino students. To develop this model, ESI launched a school design fellowship in 2013 that brings together a diverse cadre of educational leaders. The fellowship integrates design-thinking approaches and nimble start-up principles with proven educational practices that provide culturally relevant teaching and learning for students. The model will create a personalized learning experience around end-user needs, including meaningful college and career apprenticeships. This breakthrough school model leverages community resources and student assets to push forward a multidimensional understanding of what is required to raise student achievement, particularly in urban contexts. By 2014, the new school model will be ready to launch at scale.

For more information, visit:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/ESI>



MEETING OURSELVES

Thirteen Black and Latino male researchers from Penn GSE were afforded an incredible opportunity to interview over 400 young men of color in New York City who reminded us of ourselves – they were intelligent, ambitious, resilient, focused, and uncompromisingly committed to personal success and community uplift.



THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Four months after the publication of *Black Male Student Success in Higher Education*, Penn GSE Professor Shaun R. Harper delivered the keynote address at a symposium in New York City for administrators and teachers from the 40 ESI schools. The NYC Department of Education subsequently invited him and researchers from the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education to undertake a similar study in high schools. Specifically, we were asked to adapt Harper's (2012) anti-deficit achievement framework for a research project focused on Black and Latino male student success in urban education. In January 2013, the Open Society Foundations generously committed funds for the study.

The process began with the construction of a 13-member research team that included Dr. Harper, a postdoctoral researcher from the Center, and 11 Black and Latino male graduate students at Penn GSE. The team met over two months to design research instruments, rehearse effective interviewing and rapport building techniques, and work through logistics for data collection in NYC. Reflecting on our own educational histories as young men of color was an important first step. Much of this occurred in our first few team meetings, as well as in one-on-one interviews we later conducted with each other. We created structured opportunities for each team member to think retrospectively about many of the questions that we eventually posed to students in NYC. Team members were also given journals for reflective memo writing throughout the research process.

Consistent with the Harper (2012) framework, we began instrument development by identifying in literature and media recurring topics concerning young men of color in urban high schools. We then inverted commonly pursued, deficit-laden research questions to explore the upside of achievement. For example, instead of asking, "Why do so many drop out of high school," we wanted to know what helps Black and Latino males graduate. Understanding how they resist

pressures to join gangs, use or sell drugs, and skip school is another example of how we reframed questions repeatedly asked about these teens. In addition to administering the protocol to each other, we pilot tested it with young men of color who were currently enrolled in public Philadelphia high schools. The final protocol for the NYC high school interviews was 83 questions, including probes.

After receiving approvals from Institutional Research Boards at the NYC Department of Education and the University of Pennsylvania, our team began contacting principals, assistant principals, and guidance counselors at the 40 ESI schools. Specifically, we asked these administrators to identify Black and Latino male juniors and seniors who maintained grade point averages above 3.0 (or 'B'), were engaged in multiple school clubs and activities, planned to enroll in college immediately after high school, and had taken a sequence of courses (thus far) that would qualify them for admission to a four-year postsecondary institution. ESI Director Paul Forbes aided in our outreach to colleagues at the research sites. We also negotiated with these administrators dates for our team to visit their schools for face-to-face individual interviews with students. Between March and May 2013, 13 researchers traveled weekly from Philadelphia to NYC for data collection. We visited schools on Thursdays and Fridays to conduct one-on-one interviews with college-bound Black and Latino male achievers. We had reflective team meetings once data collection ended each Thursday, and logistics meetings every Friday morning. We ultimately interviewed 325 high school students, each for approximately 90 minutes.

The NYC Department of Education asked us to include in the study a subsample of Black and Latino male college students who graduated from the 40 ESI high schools. Identifying what

helped these undergraduates access higher education, having them reflect on their college transition experiences, and determining their readiness for the academic, social, and financial realities of higher education were among the aims of the college portion. We once again relied on administrators at the ESI sites to identify college men who graduated from their respective schools within the past four years. Undergraduates we interviewed also connected us with peers from their high schools who were presently in college. The college interview protocol was 115 questions, including probes. We conducted 2-3 hour face-to-face individual interviews with 90 undergraduate men.

Each interview was audiorecorded and professionally transcribed – this project produced over 12,000 single-spaced pages of verbatim interview transcripts. Transcripts were uploaded to a qualitative data analysis software program wherein team members manually performed line-by-line readings of the text and attached code words that represented recurring patterns in the data. Separate codebooks were established for the high school and college interviews, which included 124 and 143 codes, respectively. Before the coding process began, standardized statistical methods within the software were used to measure and strengthen interrater reliability.

THE 40 HIGH SCHOOLS

SCHOOL	BOROUGH	ENROLLMENT	FREE LUNCH	BLACK OR LATINO	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE	COLLEGE ENROLLMENT WITHIN 6 MONTHS POST-GRADUATION	COLLEGE ENROLLMENT WITHIN 18 MONTHS POST-GRADUATION	COLLEGE READINESS INDEX 4 YEARS
Academy for Young Writers	Brooklyn	400	70.3%	96.0%	70.9%	59.2%	64.1%	8.1%
ACORN Community High School	Brooklyn	731	77.7%	97.0%	71.9%	39.3%	49.4%	7.4%
Bedford Academy High School	Brooklyn	367	49.9%	96.5%	96.8%	75.6%	93.4%	50.0%
Bronx Leadership Academy II High School	Bronx	502	81.9%	97.2%	64.8%	37.3%	50.8%	7.6%
Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment	Brooklyn	470	67.7%	94.0%	68.8%	46.9%	71.2%	21.1%
Brooklyn High School for Law and Technology	Brooklyn	405	55.1%	98.0%	71.7%	41.2%	45.1%	5.1%
Brooklyn Preparatory High School	Brooklyn	400	73.0%	96.5%	76.1%	61.7%	58.7%	11.3%
Central Park East High School	Manhattan	445	75.5%	91.5%	85.4%	58.1%	48.5%	37.1%
Channel View School for Research	Queens	409	59.4%	80.4%	90.9%	72.3%	90.1%	21.6%
Collegiate Institute for Math and Science	Bronx	543	73.3%	83.6%	89.5%	61.2%	67.7%	64.8%
Eagle Academy for Young Men	Bronx	457	60.7%	98.2%	72.6%	52.6%	68.9%	11.3%
East Bronx Academy for the Future	Bronx	367	81.3%	97.8%	75.0%	42.0%	37.3%	10.2%
East Side Community School	Manhattan	357	69.6%	77.9%	72.7%	55.7%	76.9%	58.0%
El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice	Brooklyn	218	72.0%	97.7%	68.1%	35.6%	36.6%	2.1%
Essex Street Academy	Manhattan	343	63.3%	88.3%	77.4%	61.3%	68.5%	11.9%
Explorations Academy	Bronx	362	62.4%	96.4%	62.5%	41.7%	41.8%	10.7%
Frederick Douglass Academy VII High School	Brooklyn	365	45.8%	98.9%	63.3%	41.8%	56.5%	10.1%
George Washington Carver High School for the Sciences	Queens	474	61.2%	88.4%	75.7%	42.0%	70.9%	19.8%
Gregorio Luperon High School for Science and Mathematics	Manhattan	472	91.7%	100.0%	76.4%	51.7%	64.8%	12.4%
High School for Civil Rights	Brooklyn	401	69.3%	96.3%	61.6%	29.3%	38.9%	2.2%

SCHOOL	BOROUGH	ENROLLMENT	FREE LUNCH	BLACK OR LATINO	FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION RATE	COLLEGE ENROLLMENT WITHIN 6 MONTHS POST-GRADUATION	COLLEGE ENROLLMENT WITHIN 18 MONTHS POST-GRADUATION	COLLEGE READINESS INDEX 4 YEARS
The High School for Enterprise, Business and Technology	Brooklyn	976	71.3%	94.8%	77.3%	54.4%	54.9%	22.7%
High School for Law and Public Service	Manhattan	694	71.3%	97.4%	65.2%	52.8%	67.9%	10.9%
High School for Law Enforcement and Public Safety	Queens	536	61.6%	88.6%	71.2%	54.6%	63.2%	14.4%
High School for Service & Learning at Erasmus	Brooklyn	422	71.6%	96.0%	75.0%	43.5%	55.1%	16.1%
High School of Sports Management	Brooklyn	370	48.9%	91.4%	70.0%	58.5%	71.6%	17.1%
Manhattan Bridges High School	Manhattan	541	56.4%	99.8%	87.3%	51.7%	61.8%	26.5%
Mott Hall Bronx High School	Bronx	354	72.9%	98.0%	81.9%	67.6%	78.5%	15.7%
New Design High School	Manhattan	423	52.5%	92.4%	79.3%	47.8%	48.5%	10.9%
Performing Arts and Technology High School	Brooklyn	453	78.4%	98.9%	63.4%	38.1%	52.3%	8.1%
Queens Preparatory Academy	Queens	441	63.0%	92.5%	57.0%	43.2%	54.1%	6.5%
Queens Vocational and Technical High School	Queens	1368	74.7%	81.1%	74.5%	52.6%	57.2%	26.2%
Renaissance High School for Musical Theater & Technology	Bronx	469	52.9%	89.3%	65.6%	39.4%	48.7%	12.3%
The School for Human Rights	Brooklyn	251	78.8%	96.4%	84.7%	36.0%	56.7%	11.9%
Science, Technology and Research Early College High School at Erasmus	Brooklyn	313	66.2%	92.9%	98.6%	84.3%	93.4%	63.4%
Teachers Preparatory High School	Brooklyn	422	43.5%	97.4%	81.6%	39.6%	54.1%	22.4%
Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change	Manhattan	395	74.0%	99.0%	89.5%	65.3%	69.9%	22.4%
Transit Tech Career and Technical Education High School	Brooklyn	1317	44.6%	93.6%	70.7%	48.5%	57.9%	18.2%
The Urban Assembly Bronx Academy of Letters	Bronx	317	85.0%	98.1%	77.8%	66.3%	64.5%	19.0%
Urban Assembly School for Careers in Sports	Bronx	477	76.1%	97.7%	72.9%	54.9%	74.7%	8.2%
The Urban Assembly School of Design and Construction	Manhattan	431	71.9%	88.9%	61.0%	46.5%	71.3%	28.0%

THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT PARTICIPANTS (N = 325)

Class Standing

Juniors	45.2%
Seniors	54.8%

Race

Black	54.5%
Latino	40.6%
Biracial/Multiethnic	4.9%

Student's Birthplace

United States of America	75.4%
Other Countries	24.6%

Age of Student's Immigration

(Immigrant Students Only)

Five and Under	24.1%
6-10 Years Old	31.6%
11 and Older	44.3%

Mother's Birthplace

United States of America	31.7%
Other Countries	68.3%

Father's Birthplace

United States of America	23.5%
Other Countries	76.5%

Experienced Homelessness	4.9%
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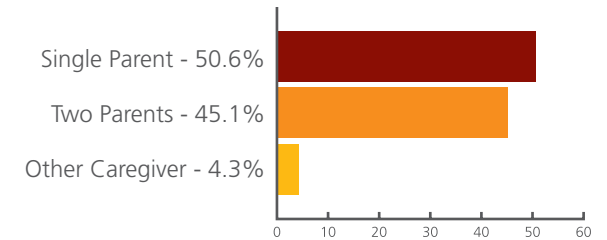
Morning Commute to School

15-29 minutes	53.7%
30-44 minutes	25.9%
45-59 minutes	12.4%
60 or more minutes	8.0%

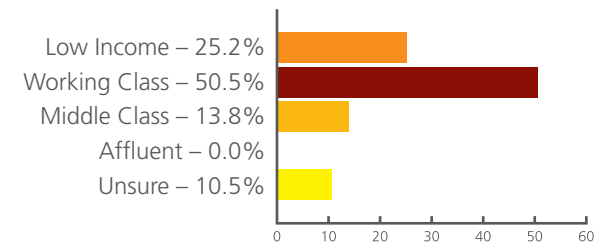
Average High School GPA	3.28/4.00
.....	85.2/100

High School Students with Jobs	17.0%
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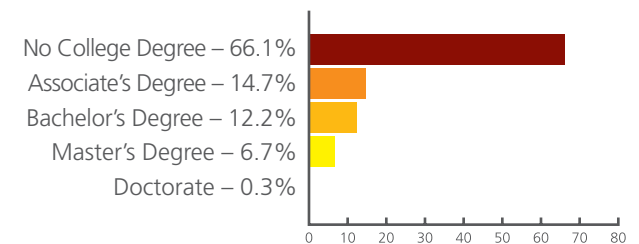
FAMILY STRUCTURE



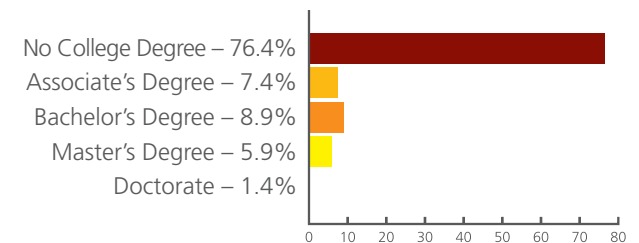
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



MOTHER'S HIGHEST EDUCATION

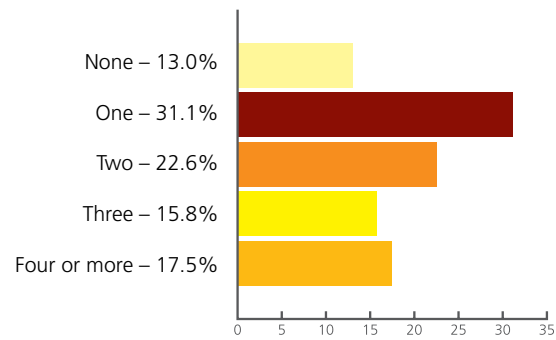


FATHER'S HIGHEST EDUCATION



*More than two-thirds
of the high school
student participants
in this study were
sons of immigrants*

Advanced Placement (AP) Courses Taken by Seniors



Seniors Who Had Taken SAT and/or ACT	98.8%
Average Number of College Applications Senior Submitted	7
Average Number of College Admission Offers Senior Received	4

COLLEGE STUDENT PARTICIPANTS (N = 90)

Race	
Black	60.0%
Latino	40.0%

Class Standing	
Freshmen	63.3%
Sophomores	22.2%
Juniors	6.7%
Seniors	7.8%

Student's Birthplace	
United States of America	77.8%
Other Countries	22.2%

Average High School GPA	3.10/4.00
Average College GPA	2.89/4.00

Full-Time Undergraduates	97.8%
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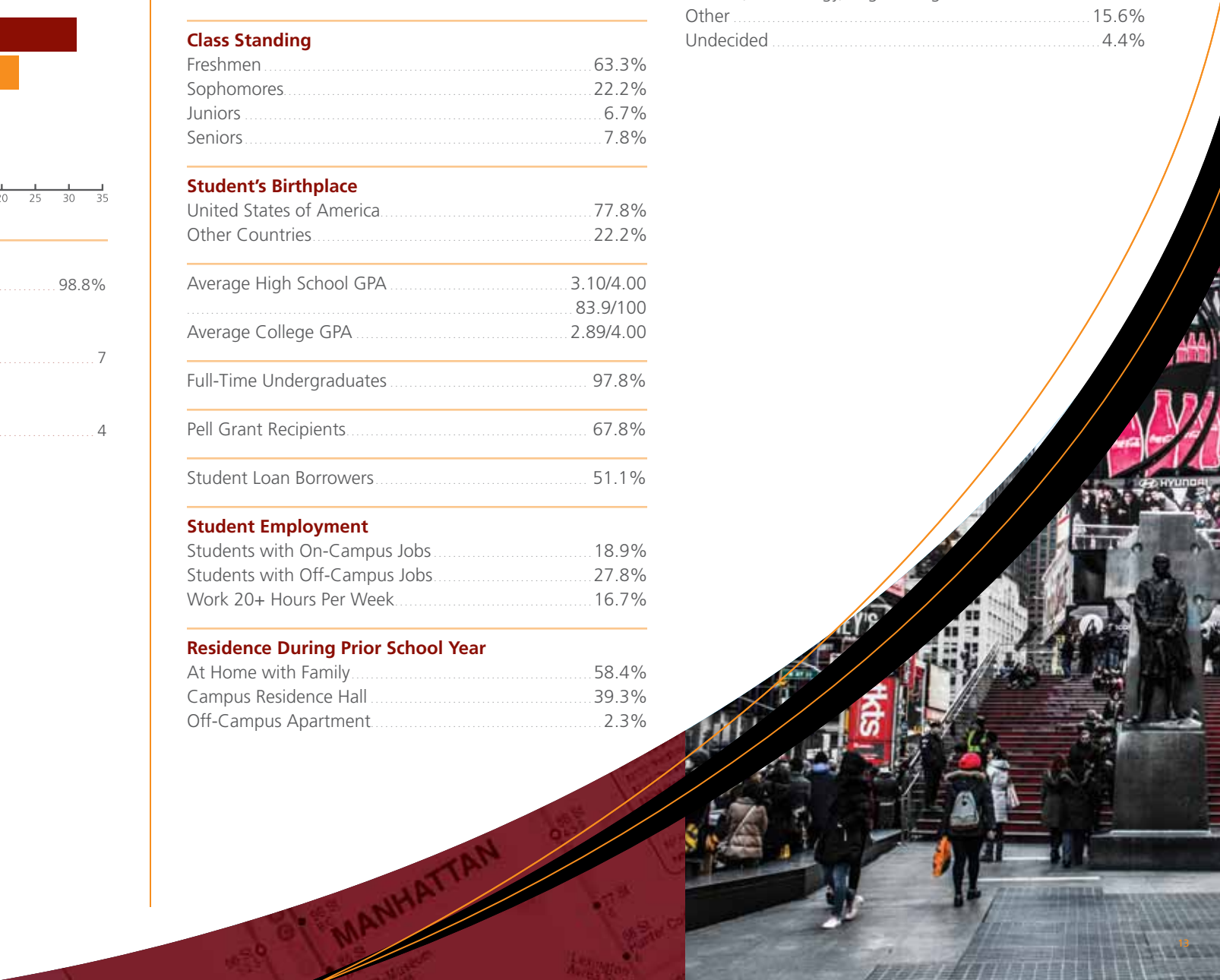
Pell Grant Recipients	67.8%
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Student Loan Borrowers	51.1%
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Student Employment	
Students with On-Campus Jobs	18.9%
Students with Off-Campus Jobs	27.8%
Work 20+ Hours Per Week	16.7%

Residence During Prior School Year	
At Home with Family	58.4%
Campus Residence Hall	39.3%
Off-Campus Apartment	2.3%

Undergraduate Major	
Business	12.2%
Humanities	15.6%
Social and Behavioral Science	30.0%
Science, Technology, Engineering & Math	22.2%
Other	15.6%
Undecided	4.4%



40 OPEN DOORS

Principals, assistant principals, and guidance counselors welcomed our research team into their schools and provided space for us to conduct individual interviews with college-bound, college-ready Black and Latino male juniors and seniors. The success of this study is largely attributable to their responsiveness and accommodation.



KEY FINDINGS FROM HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS

Nearly 500 hours of individual, face-to-face interviews were conducted with juniors and seniors across the 40 ESI high schools. Hence, it is impossible to present all our findings in this 40-page report. Data from the New York City Black and Latino Male High School Achievement Study will be presented in greater depth in peer-reviewed journal articles and conference presentations, as well as in Dr. Harper's forthcoming book, *Exceeding Expectations: How Black Male Students Succeed in High School and College*. The next several pages of this report are devoted to summarizing some key findings that emerged from our analyses of the 325 high school students' interviews. Here are 15 (of many) important things we learned about college-bound young men of color in NYC public schools:

How their families value education

We met few students who reported that their families cared nothing about education. In fact, most recalled parents and other family members conveying to them at a young age powerful messages about the value of schooling. "It's hard growing up in the ghetto, so my parents keep telling me that school is my way out," one participant shared. Other low-income and working class students also talked about how family members used their current socioeconomic condition as persuasive rationale for educational attainment. Several parents expressed regrets about having dropped out of high school themselves and made sure their children understood the consequences, financial and otherwise. A mother who stopped attending school in eighth grade told her son the following about completing high school: "I didn't do it. I want you to do it. Because I didn't make it, I want you to make it." Participants did not mistake their parents' educational pathways as disregard for the value of formal schooling. It was instead the opposite – they knew parents wanted them and their siblings to be better educated, struggle less, and have higher-status jobs that offer respectability and financial security.

A junior in the study noted, "a lot of my family members dropped out of high school, and so my mom is like, you've gotta be the first in the family to break that cycle."

He and many others understood the effects of poverty on generations of Blacks and Latinos in the U.S. and other parts of the world. Therefore, their nuclear and extended families (which included neighbors and church members) pushed these young men to regularly attend school, strive for academic excellence, and continue onward to postsecondary education. Those who would be first in their families to attend college were often reminded of why doing so was significant. Although two-thirds grew up in homes where neither parent possessed a college degree, students we interviewed often noted that their college aspirations were shaped by a non-negotiable set of expectations from parents. Young men who would be second or third generation college goers knew no other pathways to occupational or economic success besides what they had seen work so well for their mothers and fathers. Nearly every student we interviewed, regardless of his parents' levels of educational attainment, said he always knew he was going to college because it was the only post-high school educational option presented in his home.

Many parents valued American schooling so much that they traveled far (often without economic stability) so their kids could have access to perceivably better educational opportunities. First generation American students and those who relocated to New York City from different countries around the world reflected extensively on their family members' thoughts about education. We heard this repeatedly in our interviews with immigrant students: "My parents struggled and moved here so that my siblings and I could get a high-quality education." School was the sole reason many came to the United States. Consequently, neither they nor their families took it for granted. While this was pronounced among immigrant students, it is important to acknowledge that parents, grandparents, and other family members that have been in this country for multiple generations were

also consistent in their messaging about the value of education.

How high expectations affect them

While some participants were not always academically high performing, almost all remember being thought of as smart and capable when they were young boys. Even when their behaviors or school outcomes may have suggested otherwise, students said their family, church, and community members rarely failed to acknowledge their potential for greatness. Reflections such as this were commonplace: "Everybody is expecting me to be something big... this kid is going to be very successful – it's a possibility that you will see him in the newspapers one day." This same student went on to say that people in his community believed he could become president of the United States, and they routinely told him how proud they were and how important it was for him to earn good grades. Another participant noted, "Education is valued a lot because my parents and basically everyone else, all the adults in my family, they expect me to be successful in life. They have high expectations of me." Numerous others said expectations for them were always high and that people saw something in them at an early age that they had not yet come to realize for themselves.



High expectations for school success were conveyed in myriad ways. Most common was parents' dissatisfaction with grades they believed were unreflective of their children's full potential. In several interviews, young men recalled how they felt good about earning 90% on tests, but their parents' reaction was "why didn't you get a hundred?" Some had proven their academic aptitude in elementary school, but their grades declined in middle school. Their parents refused to excuse this change and instead nagged the teens, found ways to get them tutoring and other forms of academic support, and punished them by taking away privileges they had come to enjoy. One young man recalled a pivotal moment in his academic trajectory. He started getting 70s and 80s on report cards, instead of the 90s he had consistently earned prior to middle school. His dad took him on a long car ride outside of the city to express two things: (1) how he believed the young man was capable of doing better; and (2) why B's and C's were unacceptable. Concerning the second point, the father told his son that he expected him to be someone great in life, to go to college; accordingly, mediocre grades would not get him there. That car ride resonated with this young man from that point onward. Others remembered specific things family members and others said to them at various junctures in their educational trajectories that helped them realize how great they were destined to be.

How they avoid neighborhood danger

A student from Central Park East High School was robbed in 2010. When asked to describe their neighborhoods, the first adjective many participants chose was "dangerous." They went on to paint a picture of trashy streets, frequent shootings, gang activity, drug trafficking, robberies, and other crimes. Unfortunately, we often heard reflections like this: "I really just wanna move away from Bed-Stuy. I'm glad that eventually I'll be going upstate for college because I'm tired of every time I come from school, all I smell as I enter my projects is weed. And the way people talk to each other is just horrible." Another student shared, "like, it could be 2am and there are people in front of the building screaming and drunk and

stuff. I've been woken up from gun shots and stuff like that." While not every participant in our study lived in this type of environment, a significant number had to figure out how to navigate conditions like these. Their approach was simple: they did not go outside.

Many participants said that for as long as they could remember, their parents did not allow them to spend recreational time outdoors. For some, their only time outside was the weekday commutes to and from school – anything more was deemed far too dangerous. Reportedly, the majority of male teens in their neighborhoods spent considerably more time outside. Participants were sure to note that not all these young men were engaged in bad activities. In fact, they asserted that most were playing basketball, talking with friends, or simply doing nothing. "Like they walk up and down the street and they could be outside until like 2:00 in the morning and their parents don't say nothing about it," one student added. Most young men we interviewed made clear that their parents did not allow them to hang out on their blocks after dark, if at all. The safest option was to keep them inside. Their playmates tended to be others who lived in their buildings, oftentimes relatives. For the most part, their playtime and social engagement was restricted to theirs and friends' apartments.

What they appreciate about their communities

We acknowledged in the previous section that not every student lived in a dangerous community. Some declared the absence of crime was something they treasured most in their neighborhoods. Many of them had moved to the places where they presently lived from settings that were less safe. "We moved when I was seven because our garage got shot up by an Uzi [submachine gun]." This young man very much appreciated that senseless gun activity was uncommon in the neighborhood to which his family relocated. Being able to walk down the street and talk on his iPhone without worrying that someone would take it was something another participant appreciated about the safer community to which he had recently moved.

We were surprised that some teenage boys offered “it’s quiet” as an immediate response to our question about what they appreciated in their neighborhoods. Participants who had moved to suburban communities, as well as those who resided in places that were recently gentrified, reflected favorably on their newfound sense of peace and safety. “My neighborhood now? I feel safe, I don’t have to look and watch my back for anything. I feel as if I can walk down my street and look both ways and not be afraid that somebody’s gonna drive by my house and start shooting a gun. I feel safe. It’s cool.” Beyond feeling safer and being able to play outside, a few others mentioned trees, parks, supermarkets, and ethnic diversity as aspects of suburban (and sometimes gentrified) neighborhoods they had come to enjoy.

It is important to note that students who lived in high-crime areas were able to find something positive to say about their neighborhoods. Foremost was the sense of community. “It’s a family, so, like I know everybody there. Everybody knows my mom so I can’t really get in trouble... I found out a while ago that my mom knows everybody. They look out for me. That’s why I like it.” Other participants talked favorably about being surrounded by family members and numerous others from their particular ethnic groups – this was especially salient among Dominicans, Jamaicans, and other immigrant students. Many lived in the same apartment buildings with generations of family members. The close-knit sense of family, as well as deep immersion in culture and customs, was something they treasured in their communities. Proximity also afforded them easy access to cousins and other same-age kids in their families with whom they could play indoors. Moreover, for many of these young men, constantly being reminded to do well in school was a byproduct of living so close to relatives.

How reputations exempt them from gang recruitment

Overwhelmingly, young men we interviewed said gang members had not attempted to recruit them. For sure there were gangs in many of their communities, and they

knew firsthand of peers from their blocks and schools who were affiliated. They often had to walk past neighbors who were engaged in gang-related activities during their commutes home from school. Despite this exposure, most were deemed unfit for membership. “I think it’s because they know I am a good student and I’m not about that life,” one participant theorized. Others explained that they had amassed for themselves reputations for being serious students and performing well in school. Therefore, gang members knew they were unlikely to respond favorably to invitations to join. Also, not spending much time outside provided some immunity from gang courtship. “Those guys know that I don’t even hang out, they don’t even see me outside.”

Additionally, some students offered a fascinating explanation of how their academic reputations actually protected them from the pressure to join gangs. Images have been created on television and in movies of nerds walking home from school in urban settings and being bullied and harassed by gang members. Participants in our study who resided in communities with high gang activity suggested that members recognized they were going to be the ones who grew up to be successful. Consequently, they did not attempt to ruin this by pressuring these particular young men to join. One student whose brother (a former gang member) had been shot and killed recalled the following: “one of them tried to get me to join, but someone who knew my brother told them to leave me alone, that I’m gonna be somebody successful. They told me that I should stay focused on school.” Others recalled gang members advising them to do well in school and avoid getting involved with drugs, guns, and other criminal activities.

What motivates them to do well in school

Transcending poverty was the most cited factor that compelled these youth to

do well in school. The “school as a way out” narrative was pervasive in this study. Participants from low-income and working class families acknowledged and appreciated how hard their parents worked, but were not interested in laboring in the same ways in their adult lives. One student shared the following about his father: “he’s a janitor during the day and a delivery man at night. And many weekends he works with my uncle. He’s always so tired. I don’t wanna have to work two or three jobs to provide for my family, so I do the best I can in school right now and I’m going to college.” Few expressed a desire to be extraordinarily wealthy – most just wanted to be financially more stable than their families presently were. Having spacious apartments in the City that were not overcrowded was something else many participants said they wanted. Low levels of educational attainment in their families also seemed to inspire several participants. “I am motivated to be the first person in my family to go to college. That drives me,” one participant remarked.

The “I wanna be something” narrative was also repeated across several interviews. Students talked about the underrepresentation of college-educated Black and Latino men in their families and communities. “There aren’t many role models who went to



HIS THREE BEST FRIENDS

When asked about his three best male friends, most high school participants named other college-bound students who were selected for this study. Similarly, undergraduate men we interviewed almost unanimously reported that their best male friends from high school are now enrolled in college.



college. But I do know a lot who dropped out of school.” This young man went on to use his older brother as an example. “He dropped out. And now he can’t even get a job. He isn’t doing anything with his life.” Like so many others in the study, this participant was inspired to do well in school because he wanted to ultimately create a more expansive set of career opportunities for his future self. Noteworthy is that some students were from middle class homes and some had college-educated family members. “My cousin went to college and now she’s a nurse. I want to be successful like her,” one student stated. Others talked about wanting to achieve levels of occupational success comparable to their parents’.

As previously noted, more than two-thirds of the participants in this study were sons of immigrants. They talked extensively about sacrifices their parents made to get to the United States and to create stable lives for them and their siblings. As such, they felt a profound sense of obligation to honor their parents by doing well in school. While this theme was pronounced among immigrant students, it is important to acknowledge that young men from families that have been in this country for multiple generations often felt a similar sense of responsibility to their parents. Several of their parents and caregivers also worked multiple jobs and long hours. “They provide me everything that’s needed – clothes, bags, books, lunch money – I don’t have any excuse except just get up and go to school.” Across the high school sample, students repeatedly said how doing well in school and enrolling in college would make their parents proud.

What differentiates them from lower performing peers

Participants were well acquainted with the problematic educational status of young men of color in NYC high schools. Most did not perceive themselves as smarter or better than their peers – they just had stricter parents and made different choices, had clearer goals, and were more firmly committed to actualizing those goals. Their lower performing peers did not have the same kinds of structured home environments, many participants observed.

“One of my boys, his mom lets him miss school. Mine would never let me miss school unless I was dying.” Others noted that many of their peers skipped school. Despite this, teachers did not give up on them; they often tried to do what they could to motivate these young men and help them catch up when they were present. Apparently, their parents did not expect or require these low performing young men to go to college; hence, they were less motivated to strive for academic excellence. A student at Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment said the following about one of his friends: “He’s always been a mediocre student, so his parents don’t really push him to be better. Without that push, he has no incentive to be better. Teachers here try to push, but he has no one pushing outside of here.”

Peers who did less well in school also appeared to have unrealistic expectations for success, several participants thought. Some suggested that other young men of color in their schools were actually interested in doing well academically, but were unwilling to invest the effort required to earn good grades. “No one really wants to be a f-up, right,” one participant asked. Others believed their peers were interested in being rich, but were seemingly disillusioned about what it would take to accumulate wealth. “They don’t wanna work hard. They wanna get rich quick, which is what makes stuff like selling drugs seem like a good thing.” Parents, teachers, and others had convinced most young men we interviewed that educational attainment was the surest route to financial stability. Likewise, they knew that actually coming to school was the most basic prerequisite for academic success.

“Well, the difference is that some guys don’t have in their head what they really want to do in the future. They just think, ‘Oh, I will do whatever. This is easy. Let me just go to school.’” This student’s perspective reflects another way participants distinguished themselves from lower

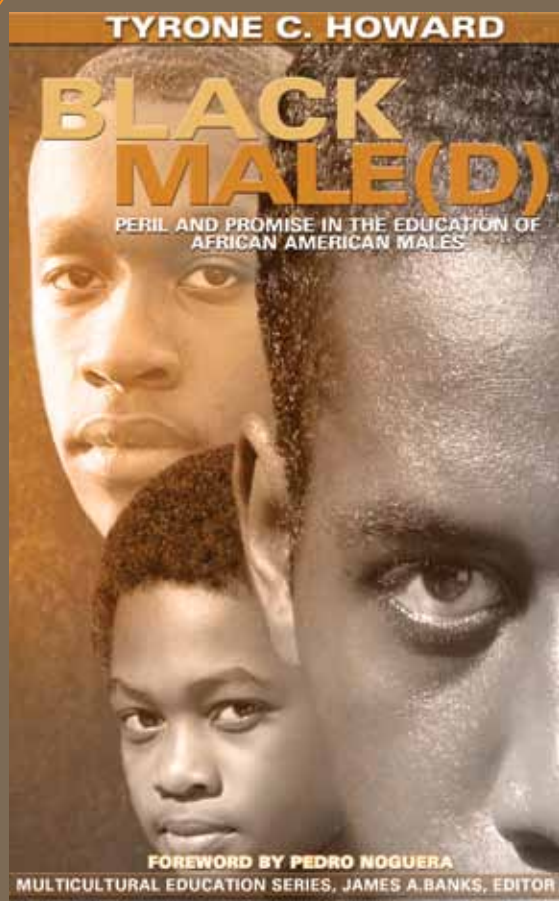
performing men of color in their schools. The 325 students in our study were clear that college was next for them; they had a good sense of what they wanted to be when they grew up, and understood how possessing college degrees would increase their likelihood of career success. Consequently, they were driven by visions of their future selves. Conversely, they surmised that other young men in their schools drifted academically because they were either clueless about where their lives were headed or their commitments to becoming an engineer, politician, or whatever were flimsy.

How they study zero hours, yet earn good grades

Prior to beginning each interview, we had participants complete a four-page profile form that included basic demographic information and other general questions (clubs in which they held membership, college campuses they visited, etc.). Half the students reported that they studied one hour or less each day; 52 indicated they spent zero hours doing homework and studying outside of school. Across the sample, students spent an average of 1.6 hours on schoolwork at home.

Apparently, time was made available for them to do homework throughout the school day.

Many also saw



afterschool hours as an extension of the school day, and therefore stayed on site to get their homework done. Students understood the difference between completing homework assignments and studying – many confessed that they rarely did the latter. Being engaged in the classroom (listening carefully to what teachers were saying, asking questions, and taking notes) enabled them to grasp content and concepts without having to study much in the evenings and on weekends. These students also met with teachers immediately after school for supplemental instruction. But many deemed studying at home unnecessary; some thought it impossible.

Why they stay at school so late

“There’s too much chaos in my home; I cannot study there,” a participant contended. This is one of many reasons why so many of the young men we interviewed stayed at their schools until 5:00, 6:00, and 7:00 several evenings each week. Beyond the typical extracurricular activities that keep many teenagers on school grounds beyond 3pm (e.g., sports practices), it was clear that participants in our study found other reasons to stay in school buildings after normal hours. Foremost was the opportunity to avoid various problems at home. Staying at school seemed to offer an escape from arguments with parents and siblings, witnessing family members struggle with drug addictions, overcrowding and noisiness in their homes (which was not conducive to studying), and a range of other negative influences. Also, remaining in their school buildings provided some immunity from pressures to do drugs and join gangs. Those who chose to stay after hours were engaged in more productive activities.

School was a safe place where these young men could simply hang out with teachers (whom many considered to be friends) and academically focused peers. Reportedly, most teachers and other adults stayed at school after hours with students to provide tutoring and academic support, assistance with college essays and SAT prep, and personal counseling. Moreover, students found space to merely socialize with peers in the building; they were not

always there for club meetings or rehearsals, but were simply talking and joking, sometimes doing homework. Our research team members were occasionally at sites after the school day ended; in many instances, the buildings seemed as vibrant at 4:30 as they were several hours prior. Intriguing to us were the palpable cultures of trust. Adults clearly trusted students to hang out after school. Those who chose to remain in the school building (as opposed to being outside with other similarly-aged boys in their neighborhoods) were not the same students who routinely broke rules or performed poorly in their courses. Principals and teachers were there, but it was clear that students had enormous freedom to use the school buildings in assorted ways. It is worth noting here that no participant reported that peers were using after-hours access to the school buildings to do bad things.

How they describe their school environments

Unlike the typical first response most offered to our question about their neighborhoods, students in this study did not characterize their schools as dangerous. Although some schools had metal detectors (the majority did not), what participants described (and what we saw firsthand) was nothing like the urban majority-minority high schools shown on television and in movies. Instead of “unsafe” and “rowdy,” they said the environments were small and family-oriented. Numerous participants asserted their schools were small enough to permit adults to know and meaningfully interact with every student. At New Design High School and a few other places, students call teachers by their first names. Several said their teachers were friends by whom they felt respected. Furthermore, young men in this study routinely acknowledged that there were some students (most often other boys) who sometimes behaved badly in school (fighting, smoking weed, etc.), but maintained there were not enough of them to contaminate the nonviolent ethos that had been cultivated.

What they say about adults in their schools

Urban high schools that enroll large numbers of low-income students of color are often portrayed as high-stress settings where frustrated, unqualified teachers have no

control over rowdy classrooms, are unable to effectively reach and educate students, and are unlikely to stay beyond a year or two because the environments are so hopeless and unsafe. This was not at all characteristic of the 40 ESI schools. We asked the following in each interview: Tell me about two of your favorite high school teachers – what do they teach and what makes them good teachers? No student struggled to immediately name and reflect fondly on his favorite pair of teachers. One student had taken geometry, trigonometry, and AP calculus from the same person. “She’s confident in what she teaches and she actually takes time to pause her lessons and help the ones who are struggling; even if they don’t get it the first time, she explains it a second time.” Others appreciated the content expertise their teachers demonstrated, their availability for help with personal and academic matters after school, their genuine expression of care for students, and how they made learning fun.

Perhaps what participants valued most were the high expectations teachers and other adults in their schools expressed. For example, Mr. Jordan, an AP English Teacher at Frederick Douglass Academy VII, “is a good teacher because he’s kinda strict. When he gives you work, he expects it to be done... this is very good practice for college,” one student remarked. A participant from the Renaissance High School for Musical Theater and Technology attributed a large portion of his college readiness to his AP Government and Politics teacher. He thought Ms. Hill taught the course like an actual college professor – she created an unusually lengthy syllabus, did not accept excuses for late assignments, and emphasized independent thinking and learning. “I’m an independent learner right now because of her. Now, I don’t need a teacher to tell me how to learn. I’ll go home and learn the material and come back ready for the test because of her. She’s the most impactful teacher I’ve ever had in my life.” While courses like these seemed daunting when they took them, participants very much appreciated being challenged. Numerous others told stories of teachers pushing them to do better, work harder, and stop procrastinating. No one said a teacher was his favorite because she or he was easy.

“Teachers here really care,” was a common sentiment shared among young men across the 40 school sites. Expressions of care were multifaceted. We asked each participant to reflect on a time when an adult in his school was especially helpful. Here are five stories they told: (1) a teacher introduced one student who wants to be a physician to her own personal doctor; (2) a student who ran away from his abusive father received support and advice from a teacher at every juncture in the process; (3) a teacher permitted a sick student to nap at her desk during lunchtime and left the building to buy him hot chocolate from Dunkin’ Donuts; (4) one teacher offered marathon tutoring from 9am to 9pm on Saturdays for students who were at risk of failing algebra; and (5) a teacher visited one student’s mom in the hospital after she had a stroke. This is just a handful of a seemingly innumerable list of things teachers did to show students how much they cared. Calming students’ anxieties just before taking the SAT or Regents exam, encouraging them not to give up when they were struggling either academically or personally, offering them opportunities for extra credit to boost their grades, assisting them with college and scholarship applications, writing recommendation letters on their behalf, and giving them life-changing books to read are additional examples. Participants also recalled times when other adults (principals, assistant principals, guidance counselors, coaches, janitors, and security officers) were also helpful.

During our visits to their campuses, school leaders did not appear distressed or overwhelmed with student discipline problems – no principal was yelling down the hall on a megaphone. We observed many administrators engaging meaningfully with students. For instance, one principal, a former math teacher, told us she could not resist helping students with their math homework. Another example is from the day we visited Eagle Academy for Young Men. Jonathan Foy, the principal, insisted that one of our team members use his office for interviews. He spent the

entire day engaging with students and others around the school, which participants said was not at all unusual. At one point, Principal Foy apologized for having to interrupt one of our interviews; he needed to quickly enter his office to retrieve a book and folder. This former U.S. history and government teacher was on his way to tutor students in that subject, something he does multiple times each week. One participant’s mom dropped by Eagle Academy that day. The principal took time to introduce our research team members to her. We later inquired about the multicolored sheets of paper taped to a whiteboard in his office; each had a student’s name and some notes. Mr. Foy explained it was part of his method of checking in with students who were in jeopardy of not graduating on time. That an urban school leader has time to tutor and track the academic progress of individual students as well as introduce parents to researchers is remarkable. Like his counterparts at other ESI schools, Principal Foy told us he is usually at Eagle Academy until 7:00 most evenings.

How their schools foster college-going cultures

“This is like a small college,” one young man said of his high school. Others described college-going cultures that had been fostered in their respective buildings. Our



RECOMMENDED READING

The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color

A Review of Research, Pathways and Progress

John Whitford Lee, Jr.
Tahara Persson
Foreword by Ronald A. Williams

Collegelboard
Advocacy & Policy Center



team observed several aspects of this in the majority of places we visited. For example, there were poster-sized spreadsheets on a bulletin board in the guidance counselor's office at East Bronx Academy for the Future that listed each graduating senior's name in one column. Other columns were used to track whether students had taken the SAT; applied to CUNY, SUNY, and other postsecondary institutions; submitted the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), as well as applications for scholarships and other forms of financial aid (e.g., New York State's Tuition Assistance Program); and had been accepted to college. Students received big checkmarks in each column after one of these college-related activities had been completed. Fascinating to us was that almost every student listed on the spreadsheet had a near-complete row of checkmarks next to her or his name. We also thought compelling that the spreadsheet was so large and so public. The guidance counselor explained that teachers, parents, and peers often interact with the bulletin board; if they see that a student has not done something on the list, they would ask (and sometimes harass) her or him about it. In that same office was another bulletin board that included college-related terms and their definitions. Students who would be first in their families to attend college probably would not have otherwise known the meanings of certain terms on the bulletin board (i.e., early decision, AP course, FAFSA, TAP, EOP,

HBCU, and Bursar's Office), hence its importance.

Participants at the 40 high schools frequently noted how teachers doubled as college advisors who offered assistance with the college choice process, admissions and scholarship applications, SAT prep, and financial aid documents. "Did you see the signs above the classrooms?" one young man asked. "We are encouraged to talk to teachers about where they went to college; they help us apply there if we're interested." The signs he referenced was something we had seen in other ESI schools. Each included a teacher's name, as well as the logos and names of colleges and universities from which she or he earned degrees. Every classroom door had one of these signs taped on or above it. We instructed participants to list on their profile forms all the colleges and universities to which they had either applied (seniors) or planned to apply (juniors). Most often their interests in out-of-state institutions were attributed to recommendations from teachers who were alumni of those places.

Halls at Brooklyn High School for Law and Technology were fully lined with college pennants from several dozen institutions across and outside of New York (i.e., Indiana University, UCLA, Stanford University, and Princeton University). At that same school, participants described how the daily announcements on the intercom included

news of students' college acceptances – every day, every senior. One student reflected on what this did for his college aspirations the year prior: “I remember hearing these announcements and thinking, ‘I wanna try to get into that college; if he could do it then I could do it too,’ you know? It started building confidence inside me like ‘wow, he goes to my same school, so I can get into that college too; we have the same situation.’” Shown on Page 24 of this report is a wall from Central Park East High School – every time a student received an acceptance letter, she or he got a new dot on the wall with the name of the institution and the amount of scholarship money received. Next to the colored dots was a placard with the cumulative total of scholarship money awarded so far to graduating seniors. As of April 11, 2013, the total was \$1,890,724. Copies of college acceptance letters were stapled to bulletin boards and taped to walls in several other schools we visited.

How they plan to pay for college

Despite their academic performance, few participants planned to finance their college education via scholarships and merit-based awards. Although some expected to receive Pell Grants and awards from the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), an alarming number of students planned to finance college through student loans and working off-campus jobs. We occasionally asked if they knew about the Gates Millennium Scholars Program, income threshold and no-loans financial aid policies at elite private colleges and universities, or the Posse Foundation's scholars program (financial aid initiatives for which their grade point averages and socioeconomic statuses would likely qualify them); their answers were almost always no. One young man planned to simultaneously work full-time and be a full-time college student. Although his socioeconomic status would surely qualify him, he had never heard of on-campus employment opportunities via the Federal Work Study Program. A senior with a 3.7 GPA at Queens Preparatory Academy expressed the following: “My biggest fear about going to college is not being able to pay for my classes... I know I'm going to be successful [academically], that's

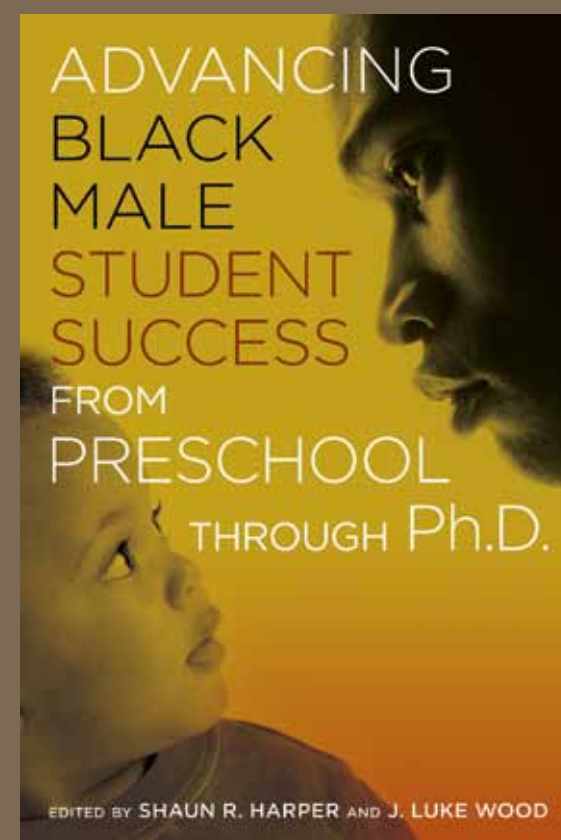
one thing. But I'm afraid I might not have the financial resources to stay.”

Why some think they will succeed in college

“In college I believe I'm going to be able to succeed because some of my teachers have actually pushed me to college work standards, you know, 10-page essays with close due dates.” Not every student we interviewed felt as confident in his college preparedness as did this young man. Responses to our questions about their readiness were mixed. Visits to college campuses, taking actual college courses in high school (dual enrollment), and affirmation from teachers and guidance counselors engendered feelings of readiness among several participants. Yet, others made confessions similar to this: “I don't know if I'm ready to succeed in college because I don't know what college is like. Everyone tells me college is tough. And, in the courses that are college level – like the AP classes – they told me study, study, study, study. I'm not a studying guy. I study like one hour a day.” Despite uncertainty among some, each participant believed an unwavering commitment to his goals would ultimately be enough to succeed in college. “If I do what I've done in high school to stay focused, I should do okay in college.”

Where they plan to live after college

The majority of participants intend to return to New York City (in some instances, their current neighborhoods) after graduating from college. Despite the high levels of crime and other problems noted in previous sections, these young men were proud of where they were from. Most were committed to using their college degrees to start mentoring programs for youth, political advocacy organizations, and businesses, as well as lead a range of other efforts that would improve the educational, health, and economic conditions of their current neighborhoods.



This study pushes against the hopeless, one-sided narrative about urban high schools that primarily enroll low-income students of color. They too send students to college. Numerous innovative practices are employed in the 40 high schools to facilitate the development of college aspirations and celebrate college admission.

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ACCEPTANCES



KEY FINDINGS FROM COLLEGE STUDENTS

Getting more young men of color into institutions of higher education is undeniably important, but so too is ensuring they are prepared to succeed in college and ultimately graduate. Hence, we chose to include in this study 90 Black and Latino male collegians who graduated from the 40 ESI high schools within the past four years. Two earned bachelor's degrees in May 2013; the rest were presently enrolled at 44 colleges and universities at the time of their interviews. Each started college immediately after graduating from high school. Similar to the other portion of this study, numerous findings (too many to furnish in a single research report) emerged from our face-to-face individual interviews with these undergraduate men. Here are seven:

Recalling the college choice process

More than three-fourths (75.6%) of the undergraduates we interviewed were enrolled at City University of New York (CUNY) and State University of New York (SUNY) institutions. The college student profile form included lines on which participants were instructed to list all colleges and universities to which they applied and were offered admission. Many applied exclusively to CUNY and SUNY campuses. Perhaps this is unsurprising, given that attending a public college or university in one's home state is usually more affordable than matriculating at an out-of-state institution. As was the case with our high school participants, several of these undergraduates had GPAs and SAT scores that would have qualified them for merit-based scholarships at highly-selective private institutions and public universities outside their home states. Only one student applied to Columbia, the Ivy League university in New York City – he was denied admission. No participant was enrolled at SUNY Albany or Syracuse, other leading research universities in the state.

An unwillingness to leave New York was not the reason many students applied exclusively to CUNY and SUNY institutions. Instead, these were often the only schools to which they were introduced. "The guidance counselor pretty much just told us about CUNYs. I knew other colleges were out there, but I didn't know anything about

those," one student contended. Others indicated their counselors only promoted in-state public postsecondary options. Some even remembered counselors advising them against applying to certain institutions. "She told me that I probably wouldn't get into the University of Virginia, so I didn't even apply there." We heard similar stories in our interviews with high school seniors. Despite this, participants in this study repeatedly praised their counselors and acknowledged their helpful actions during the college application and choice processes. They recognized how deeply invested these professionals were in helping every student graduate from high school and continue onward to college. But the problem, they believed, was that their counselors were typically overwhelmed by having to serve too many students. "She was responsible for like every junior and senior in our school. She did the best that any one person could with trying to get so many students to college," one young man asserted. Numerous others commended their former high school guidance counselors and acknowledged their limited capacity to do more.

Some participants picked colleges because of their proximity to their homes. Continuing to reside with family members seemed the best way to make higher education affordable. Several commuters indicated they would have chosen residential colleges if they could have afforded to attend. One participant who was offered admission to multiple institutions said the following: "I chose Medgar Evers because it was – umm, it wasn't a better choice – but it was easier for me to go to school there and go to work because it was like just a bus stop away from where I live. So it was convenient." Others either chose or transferred to institutions that were closest to where they lived or were employed. Among commuters, rarely were the cultural distinctiveness of the campus environment and unique curricular offerings especially weighty in their college selection processes – affordability was foremost.

Twenty-two students were enrolled at colleges outside the CUNY and SUNY systems. Five chose Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Lincoln, Morehouse, and Howard) because they visited these campuses on tours their high schools and assorted community groups organized. For example, Gents at New Design High School (an ESI student club) visited Howard during its tour of colleges and universities in Washington, DC. Two students chose Trinity College and Wheaton College because they were selected to be Posse Scholars there. Pathways to particular colleges were serendipitous for some other students. For example, one young man was attending the Big Apple College Fair where he picked up a brochure in which a small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania was listed as one of 44 Colleges that Change Lives. He ultimately applied there, as well as NYU, UCLA, Hunter College, and the College of New Jersey. The range of institutions to which he applied represents an interesting phenomenon that we occasionally saw on other lists: students had applied to incredibly dissimilar (and at times, seemingly random) sets of institutions about which they knew very little.

Perspectives on readiness for the rigors of college

Shown in the final column of tables on Pages 10 and 11 of this report is the New York

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES REPRESENTED

The 90 Black and Latino male college students who participated in this study were degree-seeking undergraduates at these 44 colleges and universities:

Bard College
The College of Saint Rose
Concordia College (NY)
Fordham University
University of Hartford
Howard University
Lincoln University (PA)
Morehouse College
New York University
Siena College
Southern Vermont College
St. Bonaventure University
St. Francis College
St. John's University
Trinity College (CT)
Ursinus College
Wheaton College (MA)

City University of New York Campuses (n = 14)

Baruch College
Borough of Manhattan Community College
Bronx Community College
Brooklyn College
The City College of New York
College of Staten Island
Hostos Community College
John Jay College of Criminal Justice
LaGuardia Community College
Lehman College
Medgar Evers College
New York City College of Technology
Queensborough Community College
Stella and Charles Guttman Community College

State University of New York Campuses (n = 13)

Binghamton University
University at Buffalo
College at Cortland
College of Technology at Canton
Dutchess Community College
Farmingdale State College
Monroe Community College
Morrisville State College
Purchase College
SUNY Delhi
SUNY Oneonta
SUNY Plattsburgh
SUNY Potsdam

College Readiness Index score for each of the 40 ESI schools.

This score represents the percentage of students who entered a high school four years earlier and passed out of remedial coursework in accordance with CUNY standards. Additionally, students are deemed "college ready" if they meet all the following criteria:

- Graduate with a Regents diploma by August;
- Score 75+ on the English Regents, 480+ on the Critical Reading SAT, 20+ on the ACT, or 70+ on the CAT Reading and 56+ on the CAT Writing tests;
- And earn 80+ on one math Regents and complete coursework in Algebra II/Trigonometry (or higher level mathematics), or score 480+ on the Math SAT, 20+ on the ACT, or 35+ on the CAT Math 1 and 40+ on the CAT Math 2 tests.

For sure, this is a complicated (and very confusing) way to determine readiness for success in postsecondary education. Nonetheless, it is alarming that at 32 ESI high schools, less than one-fourth of students were deemed college ready via these standards. We therefore chose to pursue firsthand qualitative insights from students about their preparedness for college.

Without prompting, a surprising number of participants said early on in their interviews that they were not sufficiently prepared for the academic expectations of college. A student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice offered the following: "I thought I was ready because I had done so well in high school, but I was shocked by how difficult college was. My teachers told me college was going to be harder than high school, and I knew that. But still, I was surprised by how unprepared I was." Very few students deemed their former high schools easy. "I definitely didn't skate through high school, it felt tough at the time," one young man remarked. But several participants realized, retrospectively, that they could have been challenged

more. For example, intensive writing is emphasized over testing at one ESI school. We interviewed multiple undergraduate men who were alumni of that school; each believed he was unprepared for exams in college. "The school should give more tests," one recommended.

No student considered himself intellectually underprepared for higher education. That is, academic struggles in college were not often attributable to a perceived lack of rigor in one's high school curriculum. Instead, many undergraduates felt they were not prepared for the academic expectations of college. The content to which they had been exposed in high school was deemed appropriately rigorous, but they had not been taught how to effectively multitask, study, meet deadlines, and perform well on in-class exams. In making sense of his poor freshman year academic performance, one young man offered the following: "there's a phrase saying hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard. So even though I did have the talent, I wasn't necessarily working as hard as I could."

The juxtaposition of their average high school and college GPAs (3.10 and 2.89, respectively) might suggest these students were not performing as impressively in college as they had in high school, but were still doing reasonably well. Overall, this is true. However, exactly one-third had cumulative college GPAs below 2.89. Four had GPAs below 2.00; they and a handful of others had been placed on academic probation at their respective colleges and universities. One student who began at Brooklyn College (a public institution) was dismissed because his grades were so poor. He sat out of college for one semester, and then transferred to a private institution that costs nearly \$24,000 per year, which he was financing mostly through student loans. Thirteen other men we interviewed had taken time off from college, in many instances involuntarily.

Although an alarming number of students felt they were not adequately prepared for the demands of postsecondary education, 45.6% of undergraduates in this study managed to earn cumulative college GPAs above 3.00.

There are some quantifiable differences between these 41 men and the overall sample. For instance, 78.1% of them were Pell Grant recipients, compared to 67.8% overall. All but one was a full-time student. More of them lived on campus, and fewer were employed while attending college (only six worked more than 20 hours per week in off-campus jobs). Their average high school GPA was a bit higher than the overall sample – 3.30 vs. 3.10 [and 85.5 vs. 83.9]. Moreover, these students were less likely to report in interviews that the academic expectations of college surprised them. Many of them had come to know what was expected through AP courses, as well as in actual college classes they had taken as high school students. Even students whose college GPAs were high said they often had to adjust to a level of academic expectation that was noticeably more demanding than in high school. “The teachers at my high school pushed us; I just wished they had pushed us even more,” one collegian added.

Surprises in the first college year

Like most college goers, study participants were surprised by their newfound sense of freedom, flexible class scheduling, the outrageous cost of textbooks, and the poor quality of food in campus dining halls. Many were surprised that their campuses were so large, both in acres and in enrollments. Furthermore, in comparison to their high schools, they were surprised that their colleges were either significantly more or considerably less diverse. The consistency of these perspectives was unsurprising to us; they seemed typical for 18-24 year old students encountering college for the first time. But there are some other surprises we thought worthy of acknowledging in this report.

“I think maybe the amount of time you have to put into the work. Not the actual class hours, but the amount of work and the amount of reading and writing, that’s what really surprised me,” one LaGuardia Community College student noted. Students expected college to be academically more demanding than high school, but did not anticipate having to study long hours, write long papers,

and concurrently juggle multiple assignments. Those who had done poorly in college courses largely attributed academic performance problems to underdeveloped study skills. This finding was unsurprising given what high school participants reported about the number of hours they devoted to studying and doing homework outside of school. A student who had just completed his first year at SUNY Potsdam recalled, “It surprised me how much work I had to do outside of class. I wasn’t used to that.” He and several others admitted they did not study much prior to college, and consequently did not know how to study in their new academic environments.

Many undergraduates were amazed that college was not academically tougher. “I kind of thought it was going to be extreme, like I can’t do it... I wasn’t sure if I was ready for it because I can’t do a 20-page essay in one night, like that’s ridiculous. And then I realized it wasn’t like that. That kind of surprised me in a good way.” Pre-college messages from teachers, guidance counselors, and parents shaped the expectations with which these young men entered college. But problems with time management and procrastination often shocked them. Some recalled waiting until the absolute last minute to start an assignment in high school. They were surprised this did not yield comparable results in college. A few mentioned how teachers in their high schools coordinated dates so that deliverables were not due at the same time. These students told stories about being overwhelmed during midterm and final exam periods in college when assignments were simultaneously due in all their courses. High school teachers occasionally allowed them to turn in late assignments without penalty, many noted. Their college professors were much less forgiving. “There’s a big leap between high school and college because there’s no more babying you, there’s no more spoon-feeding you like in high school.”

Another fascinating finding emerged among commuter

students, particularly those attending community colleges. One student at Bronx Community College suggested, “I kind of knew I wasn’t going to get the full college experience. It was surprising that you go there, you do your work, and you go home. It kind of was like high school for me and I didn’t get to know people and stuff like that because it was a community college... I was just surprised that I didn’t feel like I was in college.” Others alluded to the “13th grade,” a stereotype that community college is a mere continuation of high school. Several of these students indicated they were unpleasantly surprised by how much classroom environments at community colleges felt like high school environments they had just left. Explanations for this are twofold: (1) they had a narrow view of how “college” was supposed to look and feel, which was likely exacerbated by the urbanicity of their campuses; and (2) a troubling number of students had never visited the community colleges in which they ultimately enrolled.

Concerning the second point, college tours on which they had gone in high school rarely included community colleges, hence their understanding of differences between them and four-year institutions was limited. One community college student said this: “Before the first day of class, I had only been

LOOKING AHEAD

The majority of undergraduate men in this study are looking forward to higher levels of educational attainment beyond degrees they are presently pursuing. Nearly three-fourths (73%) ultimately intend to earn master's degrees or doctorates. Also, 16 of the 18 community college students plan to transfer to four-year institutions.



to the campus once to drop off some financial aid papers." This young man erroneously presumed he was familiar with the campus because it is located in the neighborhood in which he grew up. "I then realized I actually knew nothing about this place and the students who go here." Other participants, at community colleges and four-year institutions alike, had visited their respective institutions only once prior to beginning their first semester; some had never been on campus until they showed up for new student orientation.

Most unlikely to succeed

In their 2005 book, *How College Affects Students*, Ernest T. Pascarella and Patrick T. Terenzini synthesized a decade of published research on student outcomes. Accordingly, undergraduates who live on campus, participate actively in their classes, are engaged in a variety of clubs and structured activities, interact substantively with professors and administrators outside the classroom, study in groups and collaborate with peers on academic-related tasks, and attend college full-time are likeliest to persist from year to year, earn good grades, accrue a robust set of learning and developmental outcomes, graduate from college within four years, and compete most successfully for post-college jobs and admission to highly selective graduate schools. Moreover, undergraduates who are employed on campus 20 hours or less each week are more likely to persist through degree attainment than are their peers who work off-campus more than 20 hours. An alarming number of undergraduate men in our study did the exact opposite of what research has repeatedly shown to produce college student success.

More than one-quarter of the college men we interviewed were employed in off-campus jobs. Also, 58.4% were commuters who still lived at home with their families. They were not engaged in programming offered in residence halls or involved in living-learning communities with peers on their campuses. Most said they went to campus to take courses and immediately left once their last class ended. The profile form included lines for them to list clubs, organizations, and campus activities in which

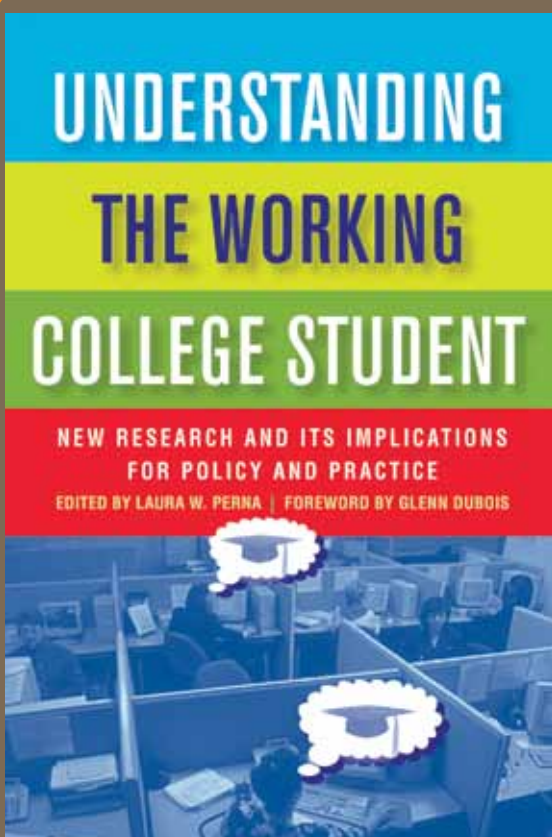
they had been involved, as well as leadership positions they held in college. These lines were blank on more than half the forms. "I don't think my college has very many clubs for students," one participant from the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) surmised. According to its website, there are more than 60 registered clubs and student organizations at BMCC, plus the College has an Office of Student Activities. Some participants were aware of engagement opportunities at their institutions, but maintained they were too busy to join or pursue leadership roles. Across several interviews with commuter students, we repeatedly heard without much variation this explanation: "Between classes, working, and commuting back-and-forth to campus, I don't have time for much else." One participant worked an average of 60 hours each week at his off-campus job. He was engaged in nothing on campus; his cumulative grade point average at the time of our interview was below 2.00.

Relationships with professors and administrators

Harper (2012) found that engagement in student organizations and participation in enriching educational experiences (e.g., study abroad and service learning programs) enabled the Black male achievers in his study to establish value-added relationships with professors and administrators. Unfortunately, few collegians we interviewed could speak with any level of depth about relationships they had established on campus. We explicitly asked these two questions in each interview: (1) Tell me a bit about your relationships with your professors, and (2) who on your college campus has been most supportive and helpful to you? Participants often appeared perplexed by the first question – some even asked, "what do you mean by relationship?" It was clear that deep connections had not been established and interactions were almost entirely confined to the classroom. "I honestly don't even remember any of the professors' names I took last semester," one student confessed.

Some participants were part of the SUNY Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and the CUNY Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) Program. EOP and SEEK provide access, academic support, and financial assistance to students who show promise for succeeding in college, but may not have otherwise been admissible to a four-year institution in one of the two systems. The programs also serve lower-income students and populations that historically have been disadvantaged in schools. EOP and SEEK participants almost always had immediate responses to the question about who had been most helpful and supportive. They named directors, staff members, and peer mentors in these programs. The centralized resources, tutoring, academic and social programming, and personal and academic counseling offered via EOP and SEEK were deemed enormously helpful.

Beyond EOP and SEEK students, few others could recall as easily where they were likeliest to find support and academic assistance on their respective campuses. The majority said their friends had been most supportive. Some named professors, usually without substantive reasoning – "he was nice to me when I took his class" and "she helped me one time when I went to her office hours" are



examples. Most did not talk about faculty and staff providing life-changing advice on tough academic and personal matters, collaborating with professors on research, or campus professionals investing powerfully in their career development. This was especially salient among participants who were struggling academically – it seemed that they had no serious relationships beyond those with peers. Several people, high-achievers and low-performers alike, acknowledged that employees of their colleges and universities were unlike teachers, counselors, and other adults at their former high schools. “At Explorations Academy teachers could see if you were struggling and they would reach out to you to see what they could do to help. Nobody does that at college.” Others expressed similar sentiments.

Financing college and money matters

Many students who drop out of college do so for financial reasons. As noted in the next section, the 90 young men we interviewed were determined to complete college. Similar to achievers in Harper’s (2012) study, undergraduates in the New York City Black and Latino Male High School Achievement Study seemed to have avoided significant financial hardships in college. Also like students in the National Black Male College Achievement Study (NBMCAS), our participants were disproportionately from low-income and working class families. But there are five notable dissimilarities between the two samples: not every student we interviewed performed as exceptionally in the college classroom, was as actively engaged in organizations and leadership positions, had cultivated sub-

stantive relationships with faculty and politically wealthy persons on campus (e.g., his college president, academic department chair, and dean of students), spent his summers doing paid internships or research programs related to his field of study, or earned nearly as many merit-based scholarships and financial rewards for his college achievements. These differences ultimately affected how students paid for college.

Harper (2012) reported the following: “participants financed their undergraduate education by applying for as many scholarships and fellowships as possible, working in paid summer internships away from their campuses, and by pursuing paid student leadership positions on campus (for example, being a resident assistant or a cabinet-level officer in student government). Common among the 219 participants was an aggressive habit of applying for as many opportunities as possible, including those that helped them alleviate financial stress during their college years” (p. 11). This was true of only a small handful of students in our study. Most financed college through Pell Grants, TAP, EOP and SEEK Program funds, and student loans. Forty percent received scholarships. However, most of those were one-time awards they received coming out of high school and were for small amounts (e.g., one person received a \$500 student leader scholarship at SUNY Delhi). Only one person in the study was a full scholarship student-athlete. Two were Posse Scholars, and two graduates of the Academy for Young Writers were Mountaineer Scholars at Southern Vermont College. Many others either worked to pay a fraction of

their tuition or relied on financial assistance from family members. Significantly fewer (in fact, hardly any) participants in the NBMCAS worked off-campus jobs.

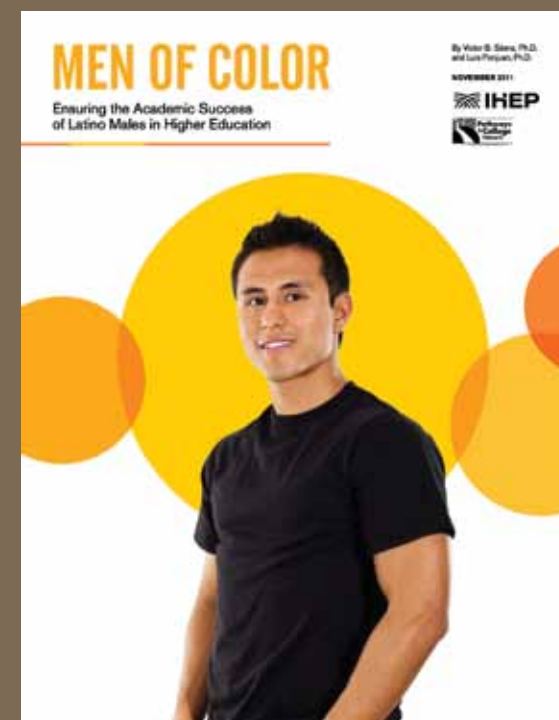
Financing college is another area in which one's exceptional academic performance in high school did not take him as far as it should have. No participant was a Gates Millennium Scholar, or a student at an elite private institution where the combination of his intellectual talent and household income would have enabled him to attend at no cost. While there was a pair of Posse Scholars in our sample, not many others mentioned having applied for Posse when they were in high school. Despite this, in most instances their aid packages were sufficient and strategies they had employed to pay for college seemed to work well. A few had experienced some paperwork and late processing problems, but professionals in their financial aid offices successfully resolved those issues. On the whole, these young men did not appear burdened by anxieties about paying for future semesters. This could be explained, at least in part, by the number of students in our sample who attended low-cost community colleges, worked jobs on and off campus, and still lived at home with family members. In sum, their finance strategies typically were not what we believe they could or should have been, but the aid they received was enough to alleviate worry and thoughts of discontinuing college.

Determined to complete college

Despite occasional encounters with academic hardship, very few participants said they considered dropping out of college. Even those who had been placed on academic probation (including the one who was ultimately forced to leave Brooklyn College) were determined to persist through degree attainment. "Sometimes it's rough out here, but I can't quit. I'm not a quitter," one student at SUNY Canton maintained. Others said the same determination and goal commitment that enabled them to succeed in high school was compelling them to persist in college. A graduate of ACORN Community High School declared, "I decided a long time ago, in like middle school, that I was going to law school. Nothing is going

to stop me, no matter how hard it gets." The profile form included a 10-point scale on which students were instructed to indicate how certain they were that they would complete college at the institutions they presently attended (1 = not at all certain, 10 = absolutely certain). The average on this certainty scale was 8.7. Fascinating is that 16 students had cumulative college GPAs below 2.50; their average on the certainty scale was 8.6. One rising sophomore said, "I struggled last year, but there's no way I'm giving up; I'm 100% sure I'm going to graduate." Those who were not absolutely certain often articulated plans to transfer to a different college or university.

A student who had just completed his freshman year at Howard University said he thought seriously about dropping out. He earned a 2.10 GPA in his first year, was not actively engaged in campus activities or student organizations, and had no substantive relationships with faculty and staff in college. He had always performed exceptionally in school, thus this sudden encounter with academic struggle was both unfamiliar and unnerving. "I was upset about how my college life was going. I determined I wasn't ready, so I figured I would drop out and take this challenge on later," he stated. But this participant was afraid that if he left Howard there was a chance he would not immediately enroll elsewhere. He was not yet ready to abandon his dream of becoming an engineer. He circled 7 on the 10-point scale that asked about his certainty of graduating from Howard within the next five years. He made lots of friends during his freshman year; he talked with them about potentially not returning the next semester. "What kept me in? My peers. People really enjoy having me around, so I definitely stayed for my peers. They were telling me that if I don't at least finish my first year I'm not going to want to come back." In our June 2013 interview, this student said he was definitely returning to Howard at the end of summer for the start of his second year. Unfortunately, he did not.



APPLYING THEMSELVES

Every high school senior in this study applied to college. On average, they applied to seven; one student submitted 15 applications. Juniors had elite universities like Penn, Columbia, and Harvard on their prospect lists, as well as community colleges, CUNY and SUNY campuses, and Historically Black Colleges.

ACADEMY FOR YOUNG MEN



IMPROVING STUDENT SUCCESS IN URBAN EDUCATION

Implications and Recommendations for Various Stakeholders

Educators, policymakers, and concerned others are desperately searching for solutions to vexing educational issues confronting young men of color in our nation's cities. For sure, no one thing will suddenly reverse longstanding inequities in urban schools. However, some important implications have emerged from our study of successful Black and Latino male students who attended 40 public high schools in the largest U.S. city. We offer in this section several recommendations for six different stakeholders. While suggestions are presented separately for each group, we believe efforts must be concurrently sustained across them and substantive partnerships among them are necessary. The ideas we present below are based on this study of Black and Latino young men, but are also largely applicable to other student populations in urban institutions across and beyond New York City. It is important to note that our recommendations are not crafted exclusively for New Yorkers or the NYC Department of Education, but instead for anyone who wishes to improve student success in urban schools.

Parents and families

Perhaps nothing is more critical than the consistent articulation of high expectations at home. Attitudes about the value of schooling are greatly shaped by messages received from parents, caregivers, and other family members. Almost all the students we interviewed said attending school, performing well, and going to college were never optional. Families should repeatedly stress to young men how important education is and how much better their lives will be if they do well in high school and graduate from college. Citing examples in one's family seems to work well. Some parents who had not attained high levels of education told their sons how much they struggled and were honest about how different their lives would have been had they gone to college. Conversely, cousins, aunts, or parents who had earned college degrees inspired some participants to aim high. Even if one's family has no college-educated members, it is nonetheless critical to emphasize college as the most reliable pathway

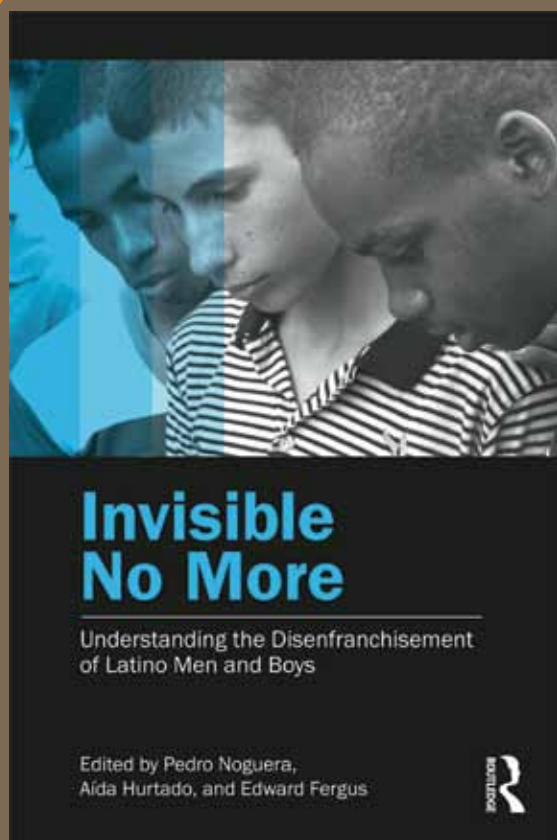
to occupational attainment and economic security.

Students in our study often characterized their parents as strict – not mean or abusive, but strict. Based on what we heard, it seems sensible to suggest that family members regulate the amount of time young boys (especially those in urban contexts) spend outdoors. This recommendation engenders much uneasiness among us, as we believe outdoor play is important. Perhaps getting boys involved in urban youth sports leagues that play organized games outside is one solution. Another could be supervised outdoor playtime in parks on weekends. But what we know does not work is allowing boys to hang out for several hours or after dark. Those who do so are unlikely to amass for themselves reputations for being serious students with bright futures, which is what protected many participants in our study from gang courtship.

Data from this study led us to two additional recommendations for parents about how young men spend their time outside of school. The first pertains to homework and studying. We still do not fully understand how so many students we interviewed managed to get their homework done during the school day. When this happens, parents should still emphasize the importance of spending afterschool hours studying. Homework is about assignment completion, whereas studying is about learning and mastering concepts. If students have no assignments to complete at home, parents could have them spend afterschool hours studying for the SAT, visiting websites to learn more about colleges, and searching for college scholarships. Our second recommendation is concerning the time students spend on school grounds after the school day has ended. This seems to be good, as it offers a safe environment for young men to socialize and do homework with peers who are similarly disinterested in gangs, drugs, etc.

It is of course important for parents to ensure their sons are actually spending these afterschool hours at school as opposed to elsewhere.

To better prepare urban youth for college, families should search for free SAT prep courses and pre-college preparation programs that include Saturday workshops, college tours, financial aid counseling, standardized test prep, and academic skills development. Many of these are available at no cost to students from low-income and working class families. Several colleges and universities across New York and other major cities offer these resources, so too do organizations such as iMentor and The Opportunity Network. Thousands of initiatives are listed in the National College Access Program Directory (see www.collegeaccess.org/AccessProgramDirectory), which is searchable by zip code. Some programs also include workshops and resources that help parents of first generation college goers better understand admission and financial aid processes. The College Board also offers BigFuture, a free online tool that aids students and their families with applying for college, selecting the right school, and financing higher education (see www.BigFuture.org).



Our final recommendation for families is to couple consistent messaging about going to college with an emphasis on completing college. Typically, the former is stressed much more than the latter. It is important for parents of Black undergraduate men to know that two-thirds who start college do not graduate within six years. And that Latino male students often drop out of college at rates higher than most other populations. Parents should therefore frequently ask their sons who are enrolled in college how they are performing academically, which student organizations they have joined, what leadership roles they intend to pursue, how many meaningful relationships they have developed with campus administrators and professors outside of class, and to which internships or summer research programs they have applied. These activities enhance academic success and increase one's chances of graduating.

Urban high school teachers

We recommend that urban high school teachers masterfully balance challenge and support. Participants in our study repeatedly praised their teachers for being so caring, nurturing, relatable, accessible, committed, and respectful. No one said teachers in his school, on the whole, cared little about students. Urban schools need more teachers to do what young men said educators do in the ESI high schools (for details, see the "What they say about adults in their schools" section of the high school findings). While they enjoyed the Dunkin' Donuts hot chocolate, being able to call teachers by their first names, getting help with college applications, and feeling a fun sense of friendship with educators, participants also appreciated being pushed by them. They found beneficial, especially once they got to college, high school teachers who embraced rigor in their courses. Thus, teachers should present students with challenging assignments, demand that they complete homework and study, and enforce consistent penalties for the submission of late assignments. This, we believe, can be done while cultures of support and mutual respect are sustained.

With the exception of those who took AP courses and the

few who completed classes on college campuses when they were in high school, many participants said they did not know what college was like. Teachers, beginning in ninth grade, need to frequently unmask for students how college works and what the academic expectations are for undergraduates. Occasionally simulating aspects of a college-level course could be helpful, so too would having college students and professors visit to describe what college is like. Bringing recent graduates back who are currently enrolled in local colleges and universities to talk with students about academic expectations and surprises they encountered would also be effective. Several college professors post syllabi for their courses online; perhaps these could be shared with students and various features from them could be adapted for high school classes. Likewise, teachers might consider co-enrolling with their students in free massive open online courses (MOOCs) – several hundred free courses are offered via Coursera and edX. If high school teachers better clarify what is expected in college classrooms, as well as differences between doing homework and studying, we are certain that fewer students will be shocked by the expectations that await them at the next level of education.

High school guidance counselors

Examples of extraordinary, no-cost practices that produce powerful college-going cultures can be easily found across the ESI high schools. We recommend that guidance counselors and educators elsewhere replicate the innovative approaches to promoting higher education and celebrating college admission that we have described herein. It would also be helpful for counselors across a school district, state, and/or region to start online communities of practice in which novel ideas are shared. An internet-based portal could be a virtual resource fair of sorts where pictures are posted, practices are described, questions for colleagues are posted, and advice from other guidance counselors is offered.

We recognize the impossibility of one guidance counselor being well acquainted with every postsecondary institution in the U.S. Moreover, we understand the limited

capacity of 1-2 counselors to help every single student in a senior class (or school) carefully construct a thoughtful list of college options. Despite this, we feel strongly that these professionals must introduce students to a wider set of choices beyond local community colleges and four-year public institutions in their city or state. It seems important to note that we are proponents of community colleges and we are not opposed to students attending colleges near their homes. However, some students with profiles and credentials comparable to those whom we interviewed would be admissible to lots of institutions, near and far. Their academic accomplishment, SAT scores, socioeconomic status, and race would likely qualify them for scholarships and other forms of aid that actually make attending an elite private college or out-of-state public university less expensive than an in-state public postsecondary institution. For example, the University of Pennsylvania covers 100% of costs for students whose annual household income is less than \$40,000; the University does this without having undergraduates and their families take out loans. The total cost of a Penn education exceeds \$200,000. It is possible for a low-income student to graduate from here with less debt than would someone attending a community college or public university in his state. Other elite private research universities and liberal arts colleges have income threshold and no-loans policies similar to Penn's. We are convinced that more young men like those we interviewed would apply to these institutions were they aware of these aid efforts. Likewise, we believe more high-achieving students would apply for the Gates Millennium Scholars and Posse Scholars programs if they knew about them – both help students attend institutions at no (or incredibly low) cost.

We note in the findings section of this report that one young man said his high school guidance counselor advised him not to apply to the University of Virginia. We heard similar stories elsewhere. At one school, we asked the counselor why she suggested that a young man not apply to one particular institution he mentioned in his interview. She explained that “a couple” students had applied there a few years prior and did not get in.

We responded by reminding her that admissions officers change, the dynamics of applicant pools evolve, and diversity priorities in the process tend to shift from year-to-year. On the one hand, we understand guidance counselors must determine how to efficiently allocate their limited time, while ensuring that every graduating senior is admitted to college. But on the other hand, the “no one from here goes there” mindset is both inappropriate and stifling – students should at least be encouraged to try.

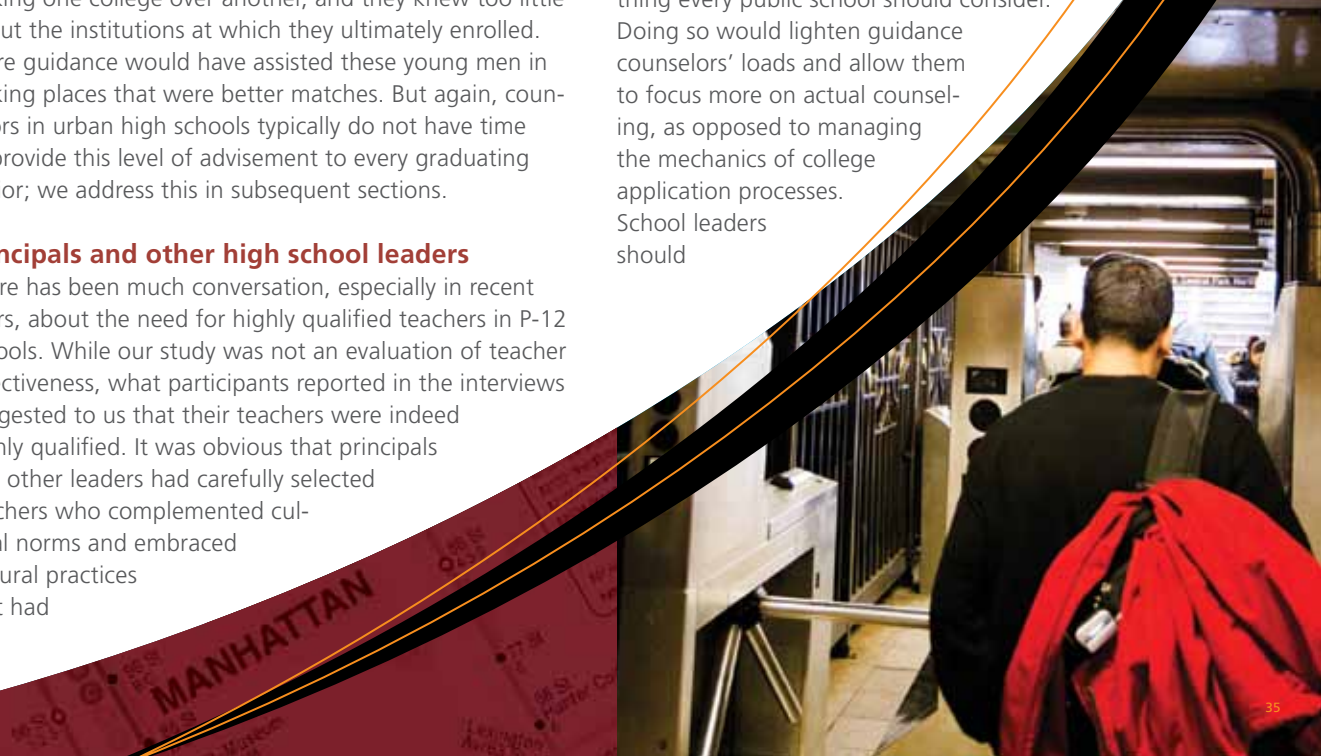
As previously stated, we believe community college to be an important sector in the landscape of postsecondary options in the U.S. They ought to be included on college tours so that students who ultimately choose them are not surprised by how culturally and structurally different they are from residential four-year institutions. It was apparent to us that students also needed advice on which schools to choose, during the application stage and after they had received multiple offers of admission. In too many instances, they did not offer substantive reasons for picking one college over another, and they knew too little about the institutions at which they ultimately enrolled. More guidance would have assisted these young men in picking places that were better matches. But again, counselors in urban high schools typically do not have time to provide this level of advisement to every graduating senior; we address this in subsequent sections.

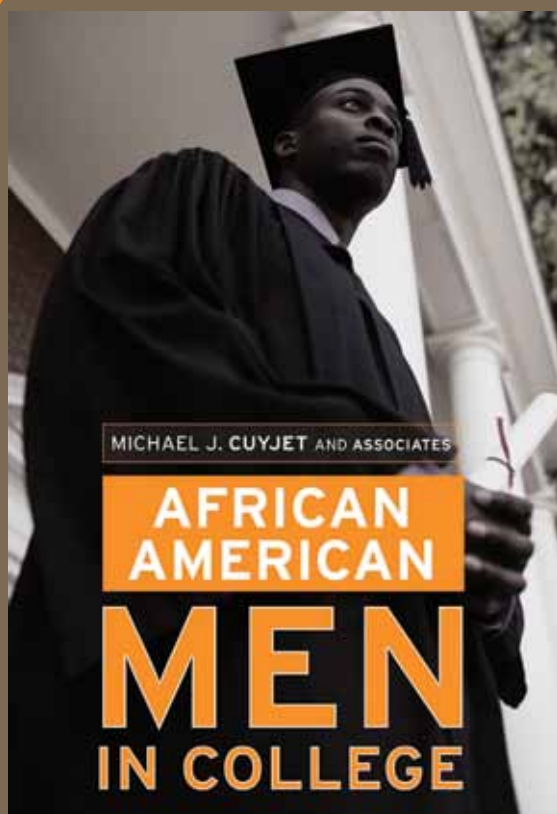
Principals and other high school leaders

There has been much conversation, especially in recent years, about the need for highly qualified teachers in P-12 schools. While our study was not an evaluation of teacher effectiveness, what participants reported in the interviews suggested to us that their teachers were indeed highly qualified. It was obvious that principals and other leaders had carefully selected teachers who complemented cultural norms and embraced cultural practices that had

been adopted in the schools. The places we visited were not revolving doors with teachers staying for only a year or two. We saw on signs above classroom doors in many schools that most teachers had earned master's degrees. We are convinced that dedicated, caring content experts can be found if school leaders outright refuse to settle for quick fixes and hire people who have not demonstrated (or at least can articulate in believable ways) commitments to philosophies and practices known to produce student success. In ten or so instances we asked principals if they hired Teach for America teachers; each said no.

Guidance counselors are in serious need of relief – most are expected to serve too many students. Bronx Leadership Academy II offers a course on college that meets every year, starting in ninth grade. The course focuses on preparing for, applying to, and succeeding in college. Writing college essays, applying to a range of institutions, and searching for scholarships are required activities in the course. Making space in the curriculum for this is something every public school should consider. Doing so would lighten guidance counselors' loads and allow them to focus more on actual counseling, as opposed to managing the mechanics of college application processes. School leaders should





also cultivate stronger alliances with community organizations and college access programs to offer supplemental guidance counseling.

Partnering with select graduate programs in schools of education at nearby universities could also be effective. For example, in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, the University of Southern California, UCLA, Claremont Graduate University, and California State University Long Beach each offers a graduate program in higher education and college student development. Many graduate students in these programs are interested in college access and strengthening students' transitions from high school to college; some even have prior professional work experience in college admissions, and others have graduate assistantships in admissions offices on their respective campuses. We are fairly certain that students in these programs (and perhaps even their professors) would find much satisfaction in adopting high schools and assisting students with their college application and search processes. In New York City, Teachers College at Columbia University, CUNY Baruch College, and New York University offer higher education graduate programs.

An all-school approach to college counseling would also help solve the issue of overburdened guidance counselors. While educators often informally assist students with SAT prep and college applications, formalizing these activities seems both necessary and appropriate. Offering professional development sessions that focus on ways every adult in the school can play a role in helping students apply to college is one way this could be done. These workshops could include presentations from directors of admission and financial aid at a wide array of local postsecondary institutions, from community colleges to highly selective private research universities. Furthermore, higher education graduate programs usually have faculty experts who study college access and student success. They too could help school officials think about effective ways to prepare students for admission to and subsequent success in college.

Lastly, we think it is important for urban school leaders to recognize that school buildings are safe havens for youth in cities. We are reluctant to explicitly suggest that principals and teachers stay at school until 6:00 and 7:00 each night, as many students said adults at the ESI schools frequently do. Over time, this is likely to lead to burnout and unbalanced lives. However, we urge principals and other school leaders to think creatively about ways to keep school buildings open and safe for students for several hours beyond the end of the school day (and perhaps on Saturdays). Our participants benefited greatly from having after-hours access to spaces that afforded them protection from gangs, family problems, and pressures to do bad things.

Postsecondary professionals and leaders

The implications for professionals who work at colleges and universities are wide-ranging and numerous. Here are ten things we think they should do to improve access, readiness, and success for Black and Latino male students:

1. Expand outreach initiatives. Postsecondary institutions are usually engaged to varying degrees with P-12 schools in their communities. Tutoring urban youth is the most common activity. Having more college students and institutional representatives visit high schools to assist with SAT prep, students' college search processes, and applications for admission and financial aid would be helpful.
2. Recruit more expansively. Colleges and universities frequently recruit students from the same high schools year after year. Visiting schools where only a handful of students are likely to qualify for admission is not usually viewed as a smart expenditure of fiscal and human resources. In light of this concern, college admissions officers should do more targeted recruitment by asking principals and guidance counselors to furnish lists of their most talented college-bound, college-ready students (like we did in this study). Moreover, religious institutions and community-based college preparation programs are other sites from which high-achieving

students from a range of public high schools could be recruited.

3. Offer admission to more college prep program participants. Many colleges and universities offer on-campus afterschool, weekend, and summer programs for high school students, a great number of which are targeted at students from low-income families. These initiatives often articulate commitments to preparing youth for admission to and success in college. One example of these is Upward Bound, a federally funded TRiO program offered at over 800 postsecondary institutions, including Columbia and Cornell. While preparing students for admission somewhere is commendable, offering more of them admission to institutions where Upward Bound and other college prep initiatives are hosted would be less paradoxical.
4. More aggressively market financial aid initiatives. It is both possible and likely that neither participants nor their guidance counselors were familiar with financial aid initiatives for low-income students at Ivy League universities and other elite institutions. This is surely one of many explanations for why only one participant in our sample applied to Columbia. Colleges and universities that offer income threshold and no-loans initiatives, as well as others with income-dependent and merit-based aid programs, must do a better job of ensuring that students and counselors in urban schools have access to information about them.
5. Couple academic and financial aid counseling. In addition to assisting students with selecting courses that satisfy requirements for their degrees, academic advisors should also provide guidance to students on financing future semesters of college. It is important for undergraduates to know about on-campus jobs, especially if they qualify for the Federal Work Study Program. Advisors should also introduce students to scholarships for which they may qualify. Additionally, encouraging academically stable students at residential institutions to become resident assistants (which nor-

mally comes with free room and board) is something academic advisors should do.

6. More effectively engage commuter students. An alarming number of commuter students in our study were either unaware of out-of-class engagement opportunities on their campuses or believed they had too little time to join clubs and pursue leadership opportunities. Jacoby (2014) offers numerous innovative strategies for engaging commuters and part-time students.
7. Initiate relationships with students beyond classrooms. Too often the onus for student-faculty relationships in college falls on the student. Undergraduates who are first in their families to attend college, those who commute, and those who may be the only person in a classroom from their racial group or socioeconomic background will likely find approaching a professor intimidating. Moreover, some may not know what questions to ask a faculty member or what to expect in a relationship beyond the classroom. Therefore, it is critical for college instructors to initiate contact with undergraduates, those who are struggling as well as those who show academic promise. Those students would benefit from engagement in collaborative research projects with faculty members, which could stimulate their interest in graduate study and research careers.
8. Confront the 13th grade stereotype. Addressing the perceived culture of anti-intellectualism is an important challenge for community college leaders and faculty. The overwhelming majority of students in our study said they did not apply to community colleges because they did not perceive them to be “real colleges.” And many who were presently students at community colleges said they were shocked by how classrooms on their campuses felt like high school. These

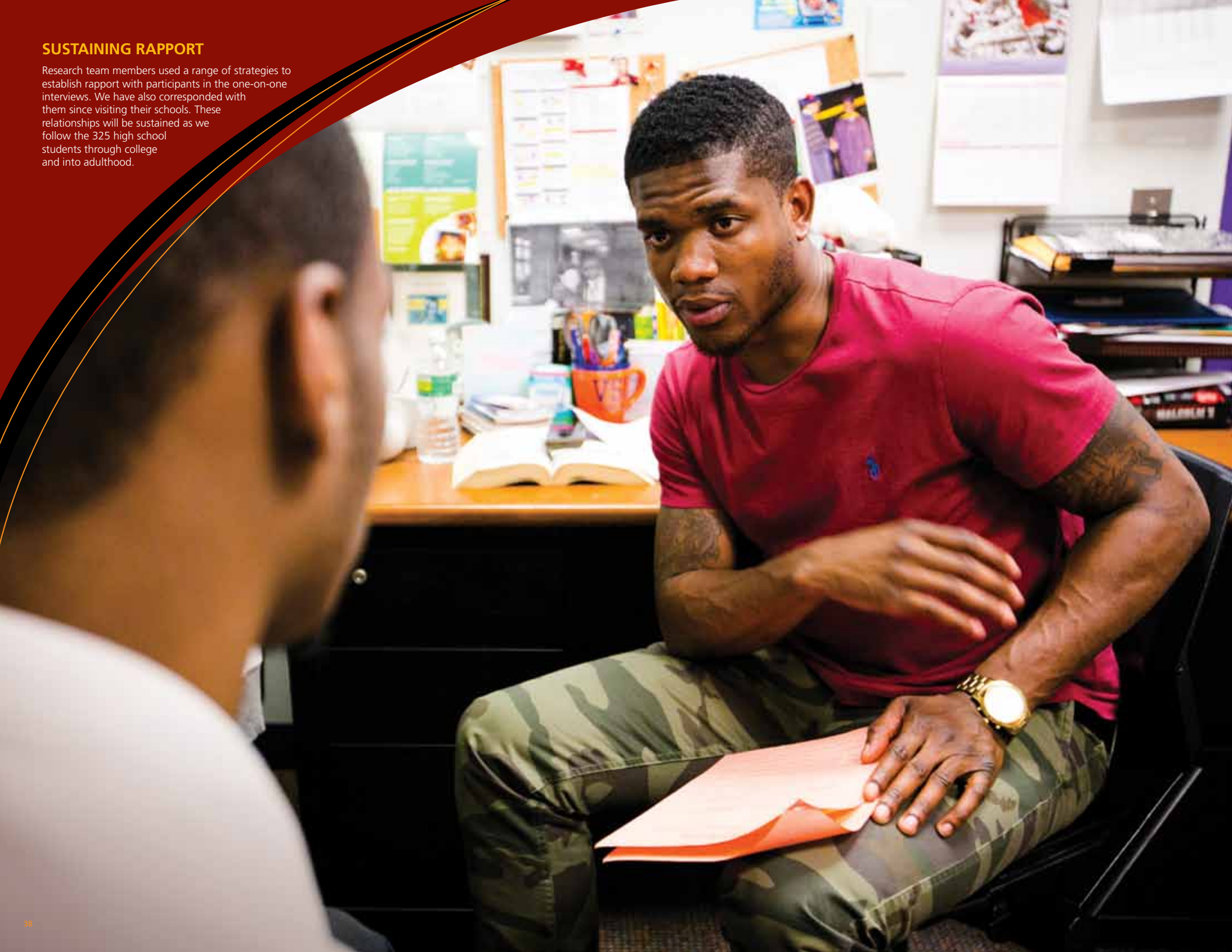
institutions provide tremendous access to students of color and students from low-income families. But our data suggest students are less likely to apply to, strive for academic excellence at, and be engaged on community college campuses if they do not view them as intellectually serious environments that differ culturally from their high schools.

9. Sustain EOP, SEEK, and other student support services. Initiatives like EOP at SUNY institutions and SEEK at CUNY institutions – as well as TRiO Student Support Services, multicultural affairs offices, and ethnic cultural centers – play a crucial role in acclimating students to college environments and ensuring they are successful. These resources are especially important at institutions where Black and Latino males are severely underrepresented in the student population. It is often through these programs and spaces that they meet same-race role models and mentors. Several undergraduates in our study indicated they would not have known where else to go on their campuses for support and resources.
10. Improve the professional preparation of guidance counselors. Although analyzing counselor education



SUSTAINING RAPPORT

Research team members used a range of strategies to establish rapport with participants in the one-on-one interviews. We have also corresponded with them since visiting their schools. These relationships will be sustained as we follow the 325 high school students through college and into adulthood.



program curricula was not part of this study, we could not help but wonder how much people learn in those programs about college application and search processes, creating college-going cultures in high schools, working with low-income students and their families, various forms of student financial aid, and matching students with postsecondary institutions at which they are likeliest to succeed.

Mayors, governors, and policymakers

Mayor Michael Bloomberg launched the New York City Young Men's Initiative (YMI) in 2011; YMI continues to be a high priority for the mayor's office. The \$43 million annual investment is indeed extraordinary – it also happens to be the amount it costs taxpayers annually to incarcerate 715 people in the state of New York. Harper and Harris (2012) called for policymakers to match taxpayer incarceration dollars with investments in educational initiatives for young men of color. We offer the same recommendation here. Undoubtedly, what ESI (the education component of YMI) is presently doing will decrease the number of high school dropouts, increase the number of young men who pursue postsecondary education, and ultimately reduce the number of Black and Latino men who commit crimes. The beneficiaries of ESI are also unlikely to find themselves trapped in cycles of poverty and dependent on government assistance. This type of preemptive investment is not only logical, but also moral. More citywide (and perhaps statewide) initiatives similar to YMI ought to be created across the nation.

Comprehensive strategies to decrease crime and poverty in urban neighborhoods are also urgently needed. Schools are situated in communities; crime in those communities is an inescapable byproduct of poverty, job shortages, and inadequate municipal investments in particular urban infrastructures. We know for sure that police practices that racially profile and terrorize young men of color are not the most effective ways to reduce crime. Urban violence will unfortunately persist until policymakers at all levels get more serious about eradicating poverty and its outrageously disproportionate effects on

Black and Latino communities.

Size permits the sustainability of cultures that have been created in the ESI high schools. Our findings would have been different were our data collected in large, overcrowded urban schools. School boards and other entities that make policies governing school size and choice in a city should think seriously about replicating the best of what has emerged from the small schools movement in New York City. Several schools we visited were co-located, meaning multiple schools occupied different floors in a building that was once a single large school. The tragic school closures that have already occurred in Philadelphia, Chicago, and elsewhere now create opportunities to rethink use of large urban high school buildings. Noteworthy is that none of the 40 high schools in our study were charter schools.

State departments of education should set limits on student-to-guidance counselor ratios. Students who attend high schools where counseling resources are plentiful enroll in college at higher rates and make smarter college choices. In the absence of legislative mandates, we are afraid variations in ratios will continually reproduce inequities in high schools across a state. Also needed are stricter regulations for counselor education programs at universities and tougher standards in state certification/licensure procedures for professionals who will serve as high school guidance counselors. We suspect that current standards do not demand sufficient expertise on the complexities of U.S. higher education, college admission, and financial aid. Also, accreditation entities that evaluate counselor education programs should do so with greater scrutiny and introduce higher standards.

Our last three recommendations are for federal policymakers. Most of the undergraduates we interviewed were financing their undergraduate education via

student loans. Many of the high school students in our study anticipated doing the same. It is therefore imperative that interest rates remain low. Otherwise, students who grew up in poverty will graduate from college with debt that continues to engender financial stress for them and their families. Second, increasing the budget for the Federal Work Study Program would allow more students to work on-campus jobs. And third, more significant investments in TRiO Programs is warranted. Several high school participants benefited from EOP at SUNYs and SEEK at CUNYs. Elsewhere across the country, these types of programs are part of TRiO Student Support Services. For reasons too numerous to list here, Upward Bound and initiatives like it that expose low-income youth to college campuses and improve their readiness for postsecondary education are critical. In 2012-13, the federal government awarded a total of \$269,229,023 to Upward Bound programs that benefitted 62,576 youth across the nation – in our view, that was not enough.

DR. SHAUN R. HARPER is a tenured faculty member in the Graduate School of Education, African Studies, and Gender Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, where he also serves as director of the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education. He is co-founder of the Penn GSE Black Male Grad Prep Academy and a faculty fellow in the Penn Institute for Urban Research. Professor Harper maintains an active research agenda that examines race and gender in education and social contexts, Black male college access and achievement, and college student engagement. His 10 books include: *College Men and Masculinities* (Jossey-Bass, 2010), *Student Engagement in Higher Education* (Routledge, 2009, 2014), *Introduction to American Higher Education* (Routledge, 2011), and the 5th edition of *Student Services: A Handbook for the Profession* (Jossey-Bass, 2011).

Dr. Harper is also author of more than 80 peer-reviewed journal articles and other academic publications. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *Review of Research in Education*, *Journal of College Student Development*, *Review of Higher Education*, and *Teachers College Record* are among the journals in which his research is published. He is editor-in-chief of the Routledge Book Series on Race and Racism in U.S. Higher Education and associate editor of *Educational Researcher*, a journal of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Additionally, he has presented more than 130 research papers, workshops, and symposia at national education conferences and delivered over 100 keynote addresses at events for professional educators.

Several associations have praised Professor Harper's scholarly work, including the Association for the Study of Higher Education (2008 Early Career Award), AERA (2010 Early Career Award, Division G), and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (2012 Robert H. Shaffer Award for Faculty Excellence). He has received grants from Lumina Foundation, Open Society Foundations, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and numerous other sources to fund his research.

Dr. Harper earned his bachelor's degree in education from Albany State, a Historically Black University in Georgia, and Ph.D. in higher education from Indiana University.

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ABOUT THE CENTER

The Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education unites University of Pennsylvania scholars who do research on race and important topics pertaining to equity in education. Center staff and affiliates collaborate on funded research projects, environmental assessment activities, and the production of timely research reports. The Center's strength resides in its interdisciplinarity – professors from various departments in the School of Arts and Sciences (Sociology, Psychology, History, Political Science, Anthropology, English, and Asian American Studies), the Perelman School of Medicine, the School of Social Policy and Practice, the

Wharton School of Business, Penn Law School, and the School of Nursing join Penn GSE faculty as affiliates. Principally, the Center aims to publish cutting-edge implications for education policy and practice, with an explicit focus on improving equity in P-12 schools, colleges and universities, and social contexts that influence educational outcomes.

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Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education





THE COUNTER NARRATIVE

Reframing Success of High Achieving
Black and Latino Males in Los Angeles County

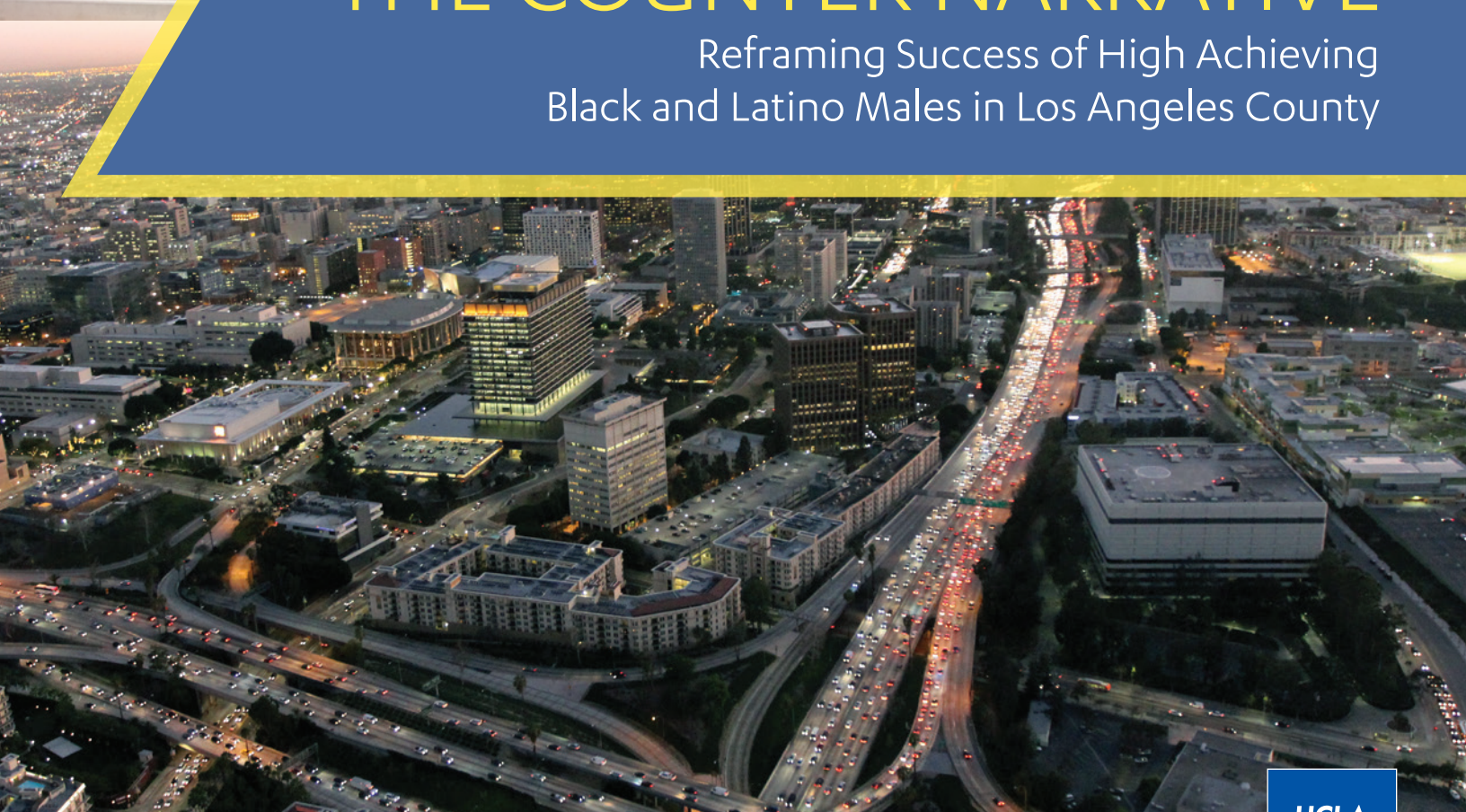


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STATEMENT FROM DR. ROBERT K. ROSS

PRESIDENT & CEO
THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT

On behalf of our Board of Directors and staff at the California Endowment, I am pleased to convey our appreciation and admiration for the leadership and work of Dr. Tyrone Howard in this report on high-achieving Black and Latino males across our region. Those of us who occupy roles and positions of civic leadership have a tendency to suffer from “deficit-attention disorder”—rather than the syndrome of Attention-Deficit Disorder that is often ascribed to too many of our young men: we hyper-focus on the deficits and “broken-ness” plaguing these young people and fail to look under the hood of the success stories emerging right under our noses. In this report, Dr. Howard has chosen to do just that: recognizing the assets and jewels of success and leadership exhibited by young men of color against incredible odds, and teasing out and organizing the lessons to inform practice, policy, and the investment of resources in the years ahead.

Thanks to you and your team, Dr. Howard, for illuminating the path of the work needed to improve the opportunities for our young men of color. This report represents an important development for the field.





STATEMENT FROM MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

SUPERVISOR, 2ND DISTRICT,
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

It is obvious in some of the rhetoric from the 2016 presidential campaign that negative stereotypes persist about young Black and Latino men despite abundant evidence to the contrary.

This study, conducted with utmost professionalism by Dr. Tyrone Howard and his staff, shines a light on success stories that have too often been omitted from narratives about the Black and Latino experience.

By deepening our understanding of how boys and men of color overcome poverty, marginalization, disparity in social safety nets, and institutionalized racism, this study will enable us to chart a better course for future generations.

We must continue to build on proven pathways to success, and to help as many people as possible embark on that journey — Black, Latino, or otherwise. Promising programs, practices, and policies must be brought to the forefront, not only locally but nationally.

It would be impossible for any one person, school district, business organization, or government to address the myriad facets of this issue singlehandedly. The effort will require a united front, a partnership that spans across many sectors and jurisdictions.

The important research conducted by Dr. Howard and his team gives us a worthy starting point, and I extend to them my gratitude and congratulations.

STATEMENT FROM DISTINGUISHED DEAN MARCELO SUAREZ-OROZCO

The Counter Narrative is the study we have been waiting for. Scholars, policy makers, teachers, philanthropists, parents and students alike need to hear the good news and fully take in the lessons learned. Tyrone Howard, a giant in our field, masterfully pivots from risk to resilience. And the results are powerful indeed. *The Counter Narrative* will become an indispensable statement for all to ponder and, at the same time, a tool for moving the needle from fatalism and despair to engagement and excellence.

The facts at stake are clear: California cannot remain the fifth largest economy in the world without harvesting the talents, dreams, and ambitions of its most-diverse-ever cohort of young students in history. Let me be clear, in our minority majority state, where boys and girls of color are the fastest growing sector of the child, adolescent, and emerging adult population, there is no happy California future without a happy future for our young men of color.

Albert Camus, the great Algerian novelist, essayist, and winner of the Nobel Prize, once said where there is no hope, “we have to invent it.” In these dystopic times when black young men are felled with impunity and political leaders routinely victimize Latino young men, the *Counter Narrative* is a beacon of light. If you are in the business of inventing hope, I urge you to study the *Counter Narrative* and learn its lessons.

—Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, the UCLA Wasserman Dean & Distinguished Professor of Education is author, most recently, of *Global Migration, Diversity, and Civic Education: Improving Policy and Practice* with James A. Banks & Miriam Ben-Peretz. (New York, Teachers College Press, 2016).”



UCLA
Ed & IS

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Tyrone C. Howard, Ph.D.

Investing in young people is one of the most important tasks that any society can undertake. Taking the necessary steps to ensure that all young people have the adequate support, skills, knowledge, and dispositions to thrive in a democratic and diverse society is essential in the 21st century. However, it is imperative that we recognize that not all young people start from the same place. Many have a host of accumulated disadvantages brought about through structural inequality, historical exclusion of certain groups, poverty, racism, sexism, and a host of other social toxins. Hence, it is even more crucial that we as a society put forth concerted efforts to assist those individuals who are most vulnerable in our society. To that end, this report focuses on two of the more disenfranchised groups in our society today—Black and Latino young men. Black and Brown young men continue to face a myriad of obstacles in their quest to be successful contributing members of society; and that is precisely why we focus on them in this work.

Growing up as a young boy in Compton, I was fortunate to grow up with many peers who possessed unbridled talent, uncanny intellect, and incredible drive to be successful in any domain possible. However, due to a number of conditions, I witnessed far too many of them fail to reach their full potential. It is painful to reflect on the countless numbers of young men who fell prey to many of the challenges that young men of color across this nation face every day: undereducation, joblessness, incarceration, hopelessness, and, for too many of them, premature death. The famous abolitionist Frederick Douglass once said that it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men. It is with that charge that we put forth this effort. Our young men are in need of the appropriate supports to see their development occur in the most optimal set of environments, in order for them to become viable contributors to their families and communities. We must raise the bar on the types of support that we afford our young men. I am a firm believer that we are the product of other people's expectations. We must raise the bar of expectations so that our young men expect to succeed because the structures around them at home, in schools, and in their

neighborhoods demand and support their excellence.

This report is important given recent events across the country involving Black and Brown males and law enforcement. The deaths of a number of unarmed young men such as Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Ezell Ford, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice, Keith Scott, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, and a number of others have raised an important need to help humanize young Black men and other men of color in the eyes of the wider society. By humanizing young Black and Latino males and listening to their hopes, dreams, and aspirations, the goal is to keep these young men alive, honor their youthfulness, and provide the environment to help them thrive and grow.

The report also seeks to stem the troubling tide in the overincarceration of Black and Latino males in this country. While juvenile incarceration has declined over the past decade, the United States still incarcerates over 54,000 youth a year, a disproportionate number of them being young Black and Latino males. Nationally, the U.S. spends \$88,000 per year to incarcerate a young person in a state facility. In 2013, the California Youth Authority reached an astounding high of \$225,000 per year to incarcerate youth (Bernstein, 2014). We also know from data from the Youth First Initiative that youth across all races commit crimes, but Black and Latino youth are more likely than their White peers to be convicted and incarcerated for comparable offenses. This is one of the reasons that Black men are six times as likely, and Latino men are three times as likely, to be incarcerated as White men. These disturbing trends must be disrupted, because over incarceration, along with lack of attention to mental health issues, plays a critical role in the significant numbers of homeless men in cities and counties across the nation.

This report highlights young men who are the products of high expectations. We take time to shine a spotlight on the resilient, intelligent, and caring young men across Los Angeles County. This report takes an unapologetic stance in stating that there are young men who are thriving in their homes, taking on leadership roles in their schools,



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are most grateful to the generous support provided by the Office of Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and the California Endowment, Dr. Bob Ross and Charles Field for their courage in investing in young boys and men of color across Los Angeles. It is not always an easy thing to do, but it is the right thing to do. We are also grateful for the ongoing support of Wasserman Dean Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at UCLA.

and making a difference in their communities. This report is not intended to be full of the doom and gloom about what is wrong with young Black and Latino men. To the contrary, we take the time to center their voices, hear their stories, and listen to their takeaways about how they have accomplished what they are doing and the recommendations that they offer on how to support other Black and Latino young men just like them. We want to thank you for taking the time to read this report. We are grateful to the 200-plus young men who let us into their lives, shared their successes, and provided a different narrative, or what we refer to as “the counter narrative” as opposed to the persistently negative narratives that exist about boys and young men of color in this country. Finally, we are most appreciative of the generous support from the office of Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and The California Endowment and Dr. Bob Ross. They have both been tireless in their efforts to support young men of color in the county of Los Angeles and the state of California. This study and report would not have been possible were it not for their support. We hope that you find this report informative, uplifting, refreshing, and inspiring. Moreover, we hope that this report moves readers to want to do something to support young people across Los Angeles County. These young men attribute their successes to people who invest their time, talents, or resources in them. We hope that after reading this report you feel compelled to either continue doing the work that you do on behalf of young people or start today to invest in our future tomorrow.

Sincerely,



Tyrone C. Howard, Ph.D.

Professor

Associate Dean

Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

Director, Black Male Institute

University of California, Los Angeles



GIRLS MATTER TOO!

This report focuses on young Black and Latino boys across Los Angeles County, but we want to be clear that by no means does this report seek to overlook, dismiss, or minimize the challenges that young girls and women of color face. A growing body of literature locally and nationally demonstrates the increasing number of challenges that girls and women of color face in schools and society (Evans-Winters, 2011). An examination of high school graduation rates, suspensions and expulsions, and access to college demonstrates that Black and Latina girls lag considerably behind their white and certain Asian counterparts (Morris, 2016). Thus, interventions are needed to stem the tide for these vulnerable populations. Kimberle Crenshaw in a report titled “Black girls matter: Pushed out, over policed and under protected” states that there is a need to examine the “racialized and gendered contours of the crisis” affecting Black girls and other girls of color. Also, most disturbing is new data from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), that women are now the fastest growing group of incarcerated individuals in the US. In 2010, more than 200,000 women were behind bars, most of them women of color. Latina women are incarcerated nearly twice the rate of white women, and Black women are locked up at four times the rate of White women (Guerino, et. al, 2011). The social, emotional, family, and economic affects of these realities cannot be overlooked, and while this report focuses on young men, we make a loud call for similar interventions, studies, and reports which addresses solutions of support for the most vulnerable women in our society. This report offers the following references and reports for suggested reading on this topic.

RECOMMENDED READINGS ON GIRLS AND WOMEN OF COLOR

- Crenshaw, K., Ocen, P., & Nanda, J. (2015). *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected*.
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INTRODUCTION



While there are a number of troubling issues affecting Black and Latino males, there remains a pressing need to tell a more complete story.

Many scholars, practitioners, and policymakers have documented the troubled and often difficult plight of young African American and Latino males (Carrillo, 2016; Conchas & Vigil, 2012; Harper et al., 2014; Howard, 2014; Huerta, 2015; Milner, 2007; Fergus, Noguera & Martin, 2014; Rios, 2011; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2016). Countless accounts of these young men have been framed around a plea for help, their endangered status, their lack of social, academic, and economic success or their over incarceration. Needless to say, there are a myriad challenges that African American and Latino male youth face in their efforts to be self-supporting and life-sustaining. However, the repeated development of a narrative around their lack of success, their underachievement, and their disenfranchisement only reifies in the minds of many that these young men are in a state of constant turmoil and distress.

The educational challenges faced by Black and Latino males have been explored exhaustively, well documented, and yet stubbornly chronic. On virtually every indicator of academic achievement, economic attainment, political participation, and social adjustment, young Black and Latino males are noticeably distinguished from other segments of the U.S. population (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012). Within the context of education, dismal patterns exist in urban, suburban, and rural school districts throughout the nation. They exist in public, public charter, private and parochial schools as well. Nationally, Black and Latino males are most likely to lag in reading and math achievement at early ages and are more likely than any other group to be suspended and expelled from school (Fergus & Noguera, 2011). In many large, urban areas dropout rates for Black and Latino males hover at or near 50%, and as a result they are less likely to enroll in, or graduate from, college than their White and Asian peers (Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2012).

While there are a number of troubling issues affecting Black and Latino males, there remains a pressing need to tell a more complete story. This complete story is centered on the idea that not all Black and Latino males are struggling academically,

most are not involved in the judicial system, and large numbers of them are thriving. It is crucial to provide a counter narrative to the often-told story about these young men being in constant crisis. Hence, the goal of this project was to highlight the success of Black and Latino males across Los Angeles county. The objective was to offer an account that is rarely seen and seldom conveyed: where these young men are succeeding. The development of this counter narrative is important on several levels: 1) it shines light on a population that is rarely seen or heard—high-achieving, community-contributing, successful, well-adjusted Black and Latino young men; 2) it helps identify people, programs, and practices that these young men believe have made a notable impact on their lives; and 3) it offers cases of success that we should seek to replicate at the city, county, state, and national level in order to create more supportive and nurturing environments for these young men. We used Harper's (2014) anti-deficit achievement framework for studying the lives of these young men. In 2013, Harper and associates (2014) embarked on a one of a kind study, by examining the lives of 400 high-achieving Black and Latino males in New York City, and were able to uncover a number of supportive factors in their schools and communities. One of the charges that Harper and his associates made was a need for other large cities to replicate this type of work to help develop a national counter narrative around the lives of Black and Latino males. We heed Harper's call by making Los Angeles the next city that identifies and examines its successful Black and Latino males.

THE LOS ANGELES CONTEXT

Los Angeles County is the most populated county in the United States; it is home to over 10 million residents covering 4,083 square miles. The city's racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic makeup is among the most diverse in the world. It is against this backdrop that this study takes place: a county that is expansive, diverse, ever changing, thriving for some, yet incredibly difficult to navigate for others. The young men highlighted in this study are part of the two largest subgroups of students in Los Angeles County schools:

Black and Latino youth. Moreover, they represent the two groups who are woefully overrepresented in the County's juvenile detention centers. Among the data on Black and Latino males are the following:

- Black and Latino males represent two of the largest subgroups in the county of Los Angeles. There are approximately 2.3 million youth in the county, and Black and Latino males make up somewhat more than 800,000 of these youth. Latino males make up close to 727,000 youth in the county and Black males make up slightly more than 83,000 (Kids Count, 2015). While these two groups make up close to 35% of K-12 students across the county, the data on these two groups has not always been the most promising.
- Blacks and Latinos make up the two largest groups in foster care in Los Angeles County. Black and Latino males are the two subgroups most likely to remain in foster care and least likely to be adopted (Kidsdata.org, 2015).
- One in three Black and Latino males live in poverty, representing two of the highest rates of any youth group, three times more than their Asian and White counterparts.
- Black and Latino boys are more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than their White and Asian peers, missing valuable learning time in the classroom.
- Black and Latino males constitute almost 80 percent of youth in special education programs. Black boys are 2.5 times *less likely* to be enrolled in gifted and talented programs, even if their prior achievement reflects the ability to succeed.
- Black (36%) and Latino (37%) males have the lowest third-grade reading proficiency rates of any students across the county. Third-grade reading proficiency is often an important predictor of future academic success.
- Black and Latino males have the lowest graduation rates of any other subgroups in the county.
- Black and Latino males are two of the groups least likely to be ready for college-level math classes.
- Black and Latino males are the two groups least likely to be referred to or placed in gifted education, Honors, or Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

Finding solutions to disrupt these troubling trends involved an examination of three domains: 1) explanations from the young men identifying *home factors* that have contributed to their academic success; 2) explanations of *school practices and*

people that contribute to their success; and 3) identification of *community based programs* or organizations that have been vital to their success. The working hypothesis of this project is that the success of Black and Latino males is due to support from multiple sources, typically involving home, school, and community working in concert to support young men academically, socially, emotionally, and culturally.

COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH: CHALLENGING THE DEFICIT NARRATIVE

Many educational scholars have challenged deficit-based narratives of people of color to rethink how we best understand the lives of culturally and racially diverse youth. One of the works that was most influential in this study has been the research of educational scholar Tara Yosso. Debunking culture and cultural capital as being monolithic and more consistent with the values, traditions, and customs of middle-class, mainstream individuals and actors, Yosso (2005) contends that for many people of color, culture and capital manifests itself in unique, robust, and dynamic ways that are often not captured in mainstream depictions. Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth model includes six types of cultural capital that she recommends educators consider in framing their interactions with students and enhancing their opportunities to learn. She contends that this framework disrupts the anti-deficit-based depictions of people of color who are often viewed by many in the mainstream as either lacking cultural capital, or having the wrong type of cultural capital to succeed in schools and society. She argues that culturally and racially diverse people have cultural capital that is on par with other forms of culture, but just is not recognized or respected in learning settings.

The six forms of cultural capital that Yosso identifies—*aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance*—are used as a framing for how we think about success for this study. These approaches to culture are important because Yosso informs us that the ways of knowing, ways of thinking, communicating, and expressing vary for diverse populations. Consequently, efforts to fit all students into narrowly defined constructs of culture will always leave some individuals in the margins and viewed as either not having culture or having a deviant or pathological culture. The authors believe the same can be said for Black and Latino males where issues of success are concerned. We believe that young



I am a second year student at UCLA now. Resources such as Upward Bound, AP classes, TRiO programs, and even one-on-one counselor attention. I also took it upon myself to look for the help I needed, and tried to get as involved as possible!

This report includes rich data that portrays insightful, caring, and empathetic accounts of young men who are successful by many accounts, some captured, and some not, by traditional school accounts.



men in schools across the country employ successful approaches to their school, home, and community work yet they are grossly overlooked, misunderstood, or not recognized. In this study, we hear more about their successes in their words. They document how they define success, what it looks like in their worlds, and by whom and how it is supported.

REDEFINING SUCCESS

As Yosso challenges traditional definitions of cultural capital, in this work we seek to do the same with how we conceptualize “success.” One of the concerns in the professional literature in education has been that success has frequently been defined in narrow terms such as grade point average, test scores, and performance in schools (e.g., quiet, compliant, and non-threatening behavior). While such areas are important to the education context, we feel that they do not capture the full spectrum of the educational and social experiences of many students, and as a result, many Black and Latino males are frequently left outside of the narrow confines of success, despite behaving in ways that are laudable outside their classrooms.

One of the anchoring questions for this study and report was to better understand how Black and Latino males define success. Furthermore, it is important to understand who are instrumental in assisting these students garner their success. In their responses we discovered young men who assisted their peers, demonstrated leadership, and thrived in a multitude of extracurricular activities, as well as putting forth consistent efforts to be the best that they could be, both academically and socially within their respective schools. However, they did not limit their definitions of success to the context of schools. Many of the young men discussed their willingness to support their mothers and grandmothers, assist with younger siblings, or help elderly citizens in their neighborhoods. These humanizing aspects of young Black and Latino males are desperately needed in order to capture the full aspects of their humanity and identity that are often missing from mainstream portrayals of them. Furthermore this report seeks to challenge conventional depictions of Black and Latino males that frequently portray them as menaces to society, violent, pathological, and criminal minded. This report includes rich data that portrays insightful, caring, loving, and empathetic accounts of young men who are successful by many measures, some captured and some not by traditional school criteria. So here, success is redefined

and reimagined in a manner that examines success in multiple contexts: the *school*, *home*, and *community*.

SEQUENCE OF REPORT

This report will be broken down into four parts. In the first section we will highlight the research methods used to collect data for this study, as well as introducing the school sites the young men were selected from. In the second section the young men’s definitions of success are outlined. We will provide excerpts from the students’ voices to capture how they viewed success. In the third section of the report we will highlight the findings from the participants. Here you will read comments and direct quotes from the young men as they discussed success in their homes, schools, and communities. The final section of the report will offer recommendations for school practitioners and leaders, elected officials, and concerned community members about how to replicate success for more young men of color. This section will offer tangible approaches based on the data provided by the young men from this study.

DATA COLLECTION

The primary data collection modes for this project included in-depth interviews. Before conducting any data collection, the principal investigator secured human subjects’ clearance from UCLA’s Institutional Review Board committee. All students’ names used in this report are pseudonyms.

Interview Protocol and Participants

The protocol for interviewing participants focused on capturing their understanding of success and the attributions that they give to their life circumstances. The research team conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with a sample of 235 Black and Latino males between the ages of 14–18 across seven high schools. It is important to note that prior to data collection, the research team brainstormed assets based indicators of Black and Latino success. The following three characteristics were identified and used to select a “successful student”: 1) grade point average above 2.5, and also non-traditional factors, such as 2) talent or leadership, or 3) resilience, that assisted their success. Selecting participants for the study was based on each of the young men meeting the following criteria:

- Students identified as Black, Latino, or both, and male
- Students had sophomore, junior, or senior status in their high school at the time of the study

PARTICIPATING SCHOOL SITES

	Long Beach Poly	King Drew Medical Magnet	George Washington Preparatory	Social Justice Humanitas	Pasadena Blair	Westchester Enriched Sciences Magnet	
Latino	21	22	19	42	9		
Black	13	20	12	0	3	19	
Mixed Race	14	1	1	1	0	4	
Totals:	48	43	32	43	12	23	201

■ Were recommended by teacher or administrator as student demonstrating one of three characteristics

- ◆ Grade point average of 2.5 or higher
- ◆ Talent or leadership
- ◆ Resilience

■ Had a willingness to participate in interviews

■ Attended a school in Los Angeles County

Analysis

Each interview was audio recorded and subsequently transcribed—this project produced hundreds of single-spaced pages of verbatim interview transcripts. Transcripts were uploaded to a qualitative data analysis software program, Dedoose, which is a cross-platform application used for analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research.

Excerpts are independently defined objects in Dedoose, meaning that selections of data were marked and listed separately and need not be coded in order to identify them as meaningful. Additionally, excerpts were reviewed centrally and listed in different ways (e.g., according to code application, descriptor field, etc.). Data also were viewed independently, lifted out of source context, or located within source context, as team members manually performed line-by-line readings of the text and identified prevalent themes and reoccurring topics, ultimately attaching key words, terms, and phrases that represented recurring patterns in the data. Before the coding process began, standardized statistical methods within the software were used to measure and strengthen inter-rater reliability.

THE RESEARCH TEAM

The research process began with the construction of an 7-member research team that included Dr. Tyrone Howard from UCLA; Dr. LaMont Terry from Occidental College; five doctoral students from the UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, Brian Woodward, Oscar Navarro (who recently earned his

Ph.D. and is now on faculty at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo), Kenjus T. Watson, Bianca N. Haro, and Adrian H. Huerta; and the assistance of four UCLA undergraduate students. The team began meeting regularly during the 2014–2015 academic year to discuss and develop the overarching design of the study, research questions, the theoretical framing of the study, and design research instruments. The team also discussed how our own educational experiences as young men and women of color influenced how we thought about school, how we defined success, the crucial people in our lives, and how those circumstances shaped us all. These early conversations were instrumental in thinking about a design that did not rely solely on traditional measures of success and “good” behavior. These dialogues were often quite informative as they demonstrated the diverse paths that we each experienced on our journey to educational “success.” Moreover, these dialogues also left us all pondering the fates of peers of ours who demonstrated similar or superior intellect, yet who were not offered the same opportunities as we were. Needless to say, the wasted potential was not lost on us as we engaged in this work. This report would not be possible without the countless hours invested by the research team.

SCHOOL SITES

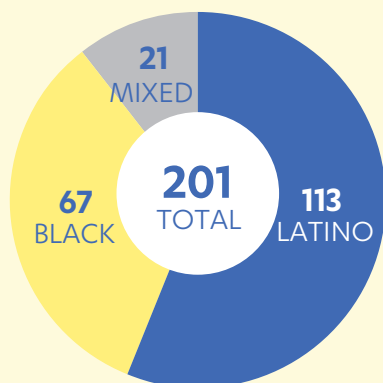
The schools that were selected for this study were chosen based on several criteria. Schools were selected based on having a significant African American and Latino population. Finding schools with a significant African American student body proved to be difficult, due to their declining presence in schools across Los Angeles County. We were also seeking to identify public schools that were open to us talking to students about their school context. Finally, we were looking for schools where we had existing relationships in working with staff, students, and families regarding student support. We are most grateful to the participating school sites. Read school profiles and demographics on page 28.



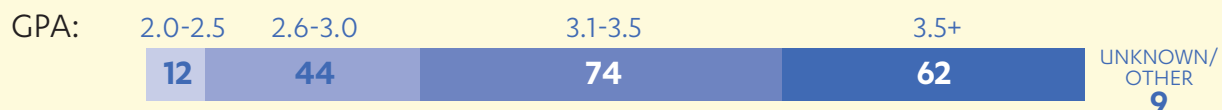
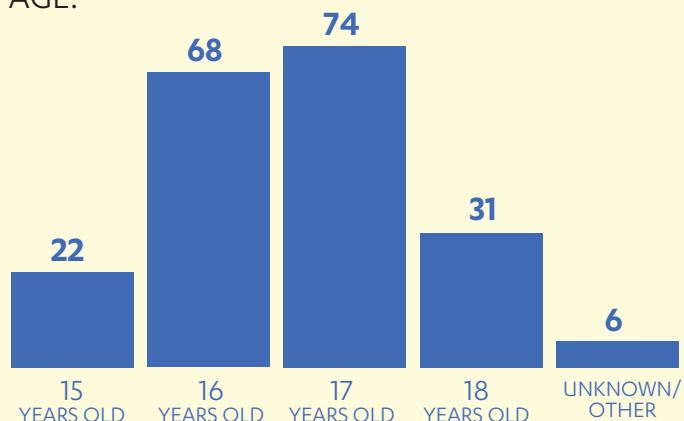
My success is directly tied to dedicated teachers... they continuously encouraged me to go to college... Programs like Vice Provost Initiative for PreCollege Scholars (VIPS) showed me how college classes were going to be like and they offered me scholarships.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

ENTHNICITY:

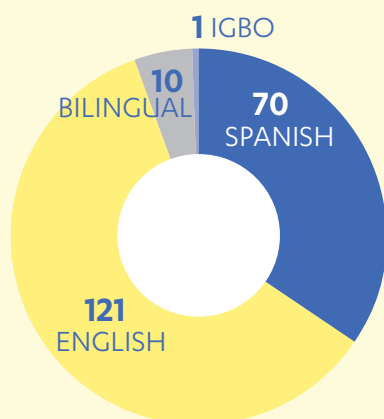


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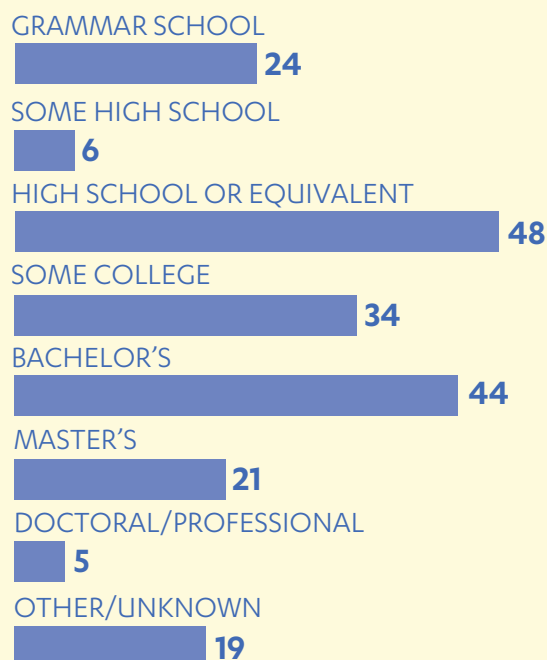


AVERAGE GPA FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS: **3.36**

PRIMARY LANGUAGE
SPOKEN AT HOME:



PARENT'S HIGHEST LEVEL
OF EDUCATION



AP/HONORS
COURSES COMPLETED





These humanizing aspects of young Black and Latino males are desperately needed in order to capture the full aspects of their humanity and identity that are often missing from mainstream portrayals of them.

When asked to describe themselves, the majority of participants provided one-word responses rather than extended answers, making the use of a table appropriate. The table reveals that the participants overwhelmingly offered more positive than negative self-descriptive adjectives. The adjective most frequently given by the participants to describe themselves was “hardworking.” Other words that were provided often included “determined,” “outgoing,” “motivated,” “funny,” and “being a leader.” Alternatively there were four words provided by the participants that can be stereotypically categorized as negative: “lazy,” “timid,” “cocky,” and “taking short cuts.” When asked to “describe yourself,” the participants offered a variety of adjectives. Again, however, the majority of participants saw themselves as hard workers, evidenced by the following quotes:

Probably hard working. I never give up. If I start something then I got to finish it

I’m a hard worker. I strive to be the best at something

Hard working, diligent and dedicated

Hard working like dedicated to what I want to do

The participants noted that their success was contingent on their own individual merit. Moreover, in their opinion it is their work ethic that separates themselves from their peers.

An additional adjective that the Black and Latino males used regularly to describe themselves was “determined.” Anthony stated:

I see myself as determined because even through adversity at home, my community, and school I feel that I can get it done if I want to and I have that drive. Other than determined I feel I’m optimistic because a lot of people see the negative here (at Washington HS) and I don’t really look at the negative I see the positive and in what I can do and what I will do and what I have done.

In the quote Anthony expressed how being determined was critical to his success. There is an acknowledgement that despite difficulties these young men may encounter in various spaces, having determination helps to combat hardships. Furthermore the participants also explained that despite negative perceptions placed on them and

their respective communities and schools, their solution was to have a positive outlook.

A number of the participants described themselves as team players and having an ability to forge productive relationships, which was believed to be salient when garnering success. Jalil commented:

I build pretty good relationships with my friends. We talk, we have fun but either way we still get our work done. Even if we talk, we get our work done by the end of class or we get whatever they assign us done before the due date. So I feel like we balance out fun with work too.

The quote demonstrated that developing relationships with peers could prove advantageous both academically and socially.

The adjectives put forth by the Black and Latino males not only demonstrate the diversity of thinking amongst these young men, but affirm how self aware they are, while challenging stereotypes of who and what these students represent.

The first step toward redefining success related to Black and Latino males is to offer opportunities for these young men to discuss who they are. Adjectives such as **hardworking, determined, and having the ability to work with others** were just a few descriptors offered by the participants. These young men expressed an inherent belief in their ability to achieve success in their schools, homes, and communities through persistent effort. Moreover the participants saw themselves as instrumental figures willing to lend a hand to loved ones in times of need, while seeking similar support and guidance in their own endeavors. Thus, by simply describing to the research team who they were, these young men were challenging deficit notions of Black and Latino youth while concurrently validating their worth.

STUDENTS’ DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS

Success is a term that has multiple definitions and interpretations. The term is typically associated with the accomplishment of an aim or purpose, or connected to favorable termination of attempts or endeavors; in short, the accomplishment of one’s goals. Developing an understanding of how Black and Latino male high school students define success is one of the primary objectives of this study. It is important to understand these young men’s drive and motivation to succeed in a society where their

success is often not expected or not viewed in abundance. Given that this study focused on young men who were doing well in their schools, homes, and communities, they were deemed either successful or high-achieving individuals by school personnel. To identify the young men in this report we went to schools and asked teachers, administrators, and staff to nominate young men who they believed fit one of these two terms. Many of the young men were surprised that someone thought of them as successful. Some were confused as to how they were viewed in such a light, while others believed that they were most deserving of such labels. Identifying the definitions and descriptions offered by these young men about success is critical for several reasons.

The self-described definitions are not necessarily ones imposed on them from adults but are more organically derived; second, success is not only limited to what students do in the classroom. By broadening the scope to other places that students occupy with high frequency we can highlight the ways in which these young men are making a difference

in their homes and communities. Finally, these self-described notions of success allow the voices of students to be centered, empowered, and validated as perspectives and opinions that matter. Far too often, young people's voices are muted, overlooked, or disregarded in discourses about them, their hopes, dreams, and aspirations. To disrupt these actions and anchoring what students think matters most in their schools, homes, and communities we can develop more meaningful interventions. Only when we are able to look past their singular constructs of what it means to be successful can we lift the prospects of those on the margins and celebrate the influence on our society writ large. The following section highlights the students' definitions of success. The diversity in reactions to being nominated for this study led us to ask the young men how they defined success. It was clear from their responses that many of the young men have internalized various signals, signs, and definitions from the wider society, media, peers, families, and teachers about what signifies "success."

If the teacher gets on the student's level, they humanize themselves... I think that that's a lot better than just yelling at a kid...





They [my parents] always tell me that they came from Mexico to give me and my siblings a better life... that's always been a pushing factor for me to succeed.

The Importance of School: Personnel and Organizations

Throughout the interviews, the young men talked about how school personnel and organizations were crucial to their success. Teachers' care, guidance, and role modeling were critical characteristics that the young men offered about certain school staff that contributed to their success. In addition, organizations housed within the school played a supporting role, specifically extracurricular organizations, university and community organizations, and team sports. These organizations encouraged academic success, opportunities for leadership, and social and emotional support. This section will explain how the people and organizations within schools contribute to student success.

PEOPLE: SCHOOL PERSONNEL AND STUDENTS

School personnel served as a supportive source in aiding the success of Black and Latino male participants at their respective schools. Administrators, counselors, coaches, core teachers, non-core teachers, and staff employed a variety of strategies to assist in the success of students. For a number of students, rigorous, relevant, and responsive teaching, caring relationships, guidance and role modeling from school personnel contributed to student success in schools. Additionally, having faculty that were of the same racial/ethnic, cultural background was salient to the young men. Students found it encouraging that a number of faculty and staff members came from similar neighborhoods and were making a positive contribution to their community. Ultimately, having people that were genuinely concerned with students' overall well-being was critical to their success in schools.

Rigorous, relevant, and responsive teaching.

Students explained that rigorous, relevant, and responsive teaching positively impacted their success in school. This type of teaching kept students engaged and enhanced learning, while also providing positive teacher-student relationships. To begin, students often said that they thrived in rigorous classrooms that made learning interesting and meaningful. For example, Lalo stated:

Mr. Allende's class is more active than other teachers. He gets everyone to talk and everyone

gives their opinion, everyone thinks harder than they do in other classes, and we all do a lot of writing, discussions, and lectures. But the way he teaches is really interesting.

The participants in the study explained that student engagement went beyond making the class entertaining but involved students engaging in rigorous course material. Rigorous, relevant, and responsive teaching required thoughtful unit and lesson plans to make learning meaningful. In addition, the participants also explained the importance of teachers making learning relevant. Below a student explains how his physics teacher made this possible. Nicholas offered the following:

He (teacher) would relate it to real life situations ... we built a lighthouse where we actually had to circuit and wire all the lighting ourselves, which was really cool. It was difficult but it was cool. I liked that. And we also built some headphones as well ... We actually built a heat engine ... you build the engine and then you put it in a boat and it actually starts moving ... I like hands-on teaching.

In this example, the teacher provided multiple opportunities to connect physics to "real life situations." Nicholas was able to see his learning cross over into reality through a hands-on approach. Other students provided similar examples, such as historical re-enactments, science labs, and lessons that connected to their lived reality. Outside of engagement and content learning, responsive teacher-student interactions were often mentioned. The excerpt below describes a responsive approach to supporting struggling students. Hakeem explains:

If the teacher gets on the student's level, they humanize themselves. They get on your level and they tell you, "Yeah, I've been in your position, we can do this. I'm going to help you get from here to here. I've been through what you've been through." I think that that's a lot better than just yelling at a kid for not doing their homework. Just understanding their perspective.

Hakeem explains that getting “on the student’s level” is a positive approach to assist a student succeed in the classroom. Students often mentioned that they benefitted from teachers with similar cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Culturally relevant interactions often provide the nudge students need to overcome an obstacle in a given classroom. Given the racial and ethnic demographics in today’s schools, having teachers of color may not always be possible. However, a number of the students highlighted the need for teachers to be humanistic and culturally sensitive in their interactions with students. The following sections will further describe how school personnel demonstrate care, guidance, and role modeling for students in and out of the classroom.

School personnel providing care, mentorship, and role modeling. One emerging theme within the interviews was the critical role that school personnel played in helping the participants achieve both personal and academic success. Three primary ways that school personnel aided the participants within the schooling environment were demonstrating care, guidance, and being a role model for these young men. The school staff not only enhanced the participants’ individual success, but also made education more meaningful for them in the process. Below are examples that the young men offered regarding how staff members were caring, provided guidance, and served as role models for the Black and Latino males, resulting in their success within schools.

Mr. Johansen...you know seeing a black dude up there teaching who looks like you, and is pushing you to be better, it makes a difference. We need more teachers like him.—Devonte

Care. Having knowledge that school personnel not only care but are willing to demonstrate that care were significant factors associated with the participants’ success in schools. Jose commented on how his school counselor Mrs. Johnson demonstrated care for him by stating:

My counselor she really helps ... with college and stuff and then even with your classes. If you need help, just ask for advice like, “which class should I take, which ones are colleges looking for” ... she’s just really welcoming, like kind, and very relatable and you can talk to them about life and about different things.

Similarly, Arturo explains how his teachers make time to support his success.



Some teachers offer assistance for students after school, during lunch, schedule study sessions, they seem to care about our success in the classroom. They’re the first people to make sure we are all right.

While it may seem by the quotes provided that these educators were just doing their job, Jose and Arturo’s counselor and teacher respectively went above and beyond what was required of them. It was important to these educators that they meet their students’ overall needs, both from an academic and socio-emotional standpoint.

Another example of how the participants’ teachers demonstrated that they cared about the young men was their insistence on setting high expectations. For example Mark had a teacher who persuaded him to enroll in a more rigorous course despite his reluctance. Mark maintained:

My teachers have had a pretty big positive impact in the sense that they sort of nudged me a little into trying a harder class. I remember my sophomore year, my Biology teacher was talking with me and she was like, “You should consider taking Honors Chemistry” and I wasn’t sure about it at the time but after thinking about it and talking about it, I was like “Well this teacher feels like I can do it. So if she thinks I can do it why shouldn’t I think that I can do it?” Afterwards I was like “Well maybe I can do it so let’s sign up for it and see what happens.” Then I ended up taking Honors Chem next year and passing with an A.

Success is not only limited to what students do in the classroom. By broadening the scope to other places that students occupy with high frequency we can highlight the ways in which these young men are making a difference in their homes and communities.

Rigorous, relevant, and responsive teaching, caring relationships, guidance and role modeling from school personnel contributed to student success in schools.

Mark's comment illustrated that the teacher had more confidence in his own abilities than he had in himself. The teacher convinced him to take a more challenging course, resulting in Mark receiving an A in the course. Encouraging students to exceed their own expectations exemplified how teachers demonstrated care for the participants, while setting a standard of excellence for the males to follow in school.

To ensure student success, a number of teachers developed initiatives designed to support the academic and social needs of students in general and Black and Latino males in particular. Xavier stated:

Mr. McKeller, he's started YBMG, Young Black Male Group, we bring awareness stuff like that. We dress up on Mondays and yeah, it gave a positive outlook.

Showing interest in the "whole" person, being available and flexible with your time, establishing high expectations, and developing initiatives for the participants were just a few of the ways school personnel signified that they cared about the male participants and wanted them to have success in school. In addition to demonstrating care, providing mentorship for the young men was also a salient factor in their success.

Mentorship. For a number of the participants, school personnel provided the type of mentorship that increased the likelihood of the students having success in schools. The participants noted that

having staff members who were personable with students served as an important part of mentoring. Along these lines, Joseph remarked:

Mrs. Washington (biology teacher) talked about her own personal experiences going to UCLA, how she studied at school, didn't go out on the weekends because she put school as a priority and that kind of changed the way I viewed things.

The willingness of Joseph's teacher to discuss her collegiate experiences not only allowed insight into how she was able to successfully navigate school, but it also created an opportunity for her students to have a better understanding of who she was. In addition to being personal, being available was expressed by students as an important factor contributing toward their success. John revealed this about his teacher:

He's (Mr. Wilkerson—history teacher) basically always been around. Say like a real life mentor, someone that followed me, and make sure I was on track.

The quote above reveals that for this student, Mr. Wilkerson extended his role beyond the classroom by becoming a mentor and someone that the young men could place their trust in. As a result of the teacher demonstrating his investment in his student's overall well-being, this student was assured of the teacher's commitment to his success in school. The role of mentor was extended even further as staff members were seen as father figures to some of the students. Carl, a high school junior, asserted:

He (Coach Wilson) kinda acts like our dad, everyone on the team, he's our football dad so he cares about football but that is not the only focus, his main focus is like getting us ready for the real world.

The quote highlighted that the football coach at this particular school served as a father figure for this student and many others. Carl remarks that while leading young men on the football field was important, his coach's primary concern was his ability to prepare the young men for the world off the field. In expressing this sentiment to his players, the coach had the dual role of athletic leader and father figure. The ability to have personal relationships, making oneself available, and serving as a parental figure helped school personnel and students forge a bond that allowed for the mentorship necessary to be successful in school.



SECTION III

Home as a Source of Support

The Black and Latino males in our study repeatedly referred to their homes as safe havens where love, care, and encouragement are ever-present. The chorus of the young men's narratives speaks to permanence of adult support, important immigration experiences, the pendulum of challenges and triumphs at home, and the value of family and education. The young men in the study also characterize their homes as spaces of empowerment that consistently contributed to their aspirations to succeed. This section highlights how the dynamics of the "home" have guided the young men and served as a place of affirmation to continue despite the barriers they encounter.

RESILIENCY IN THE HOME

For the young men in this study, resiliency was displayed on a daily basis. A majority of the young men lived in single-parent households or in homes where both parents worked extensive hours. So many of them addressed the manner in which they had to manifest resiliency to deal with various challenges:

I don't really see my dad because he's been absent all my life... I'm really more close to my uncle and my grandparents... they've been there all my life... Don't get me wrong, I look up to him as well, but it's not the same bond that I feel with my grandparents and my uncle, and they help me with a lot of things in life.

While a narrative has emerged where large numbers of children of color grow up in fatherless homes, this data demonstrates that although fathers were not always present in the home, there were other men who played prominent roles; uncles, grandfathers, cousins, and older brothers were mentioned often. This is important to note because much has been made about the tragedies of Black and Latino males who do not have positive male role models in their lives. While some might view the absence of fathers as a deficit, to be clear, many of the participants stressed that there were still important men in their lives. Other participants talked about this reality:

My uncle... he's more like a father, cause I never had the parental support with them [my parents]... I don't want to blame them or anything but it was just probably for their concern over trying to be stable, have a home. So my uncle was the one... [pushing] me towards school more... come to one of my track meets or... take me places if they can't come to like a parent conference, he'd be like the substitute to come.

Salvador added:

My godparents... they are also very supportive... they are always there for me and, when I have trouble with the car, or for example over summer... I wanted to buy my own car... [and] he [godfather] helped me get a car. It's really great cuz... he helps me with everything.

It should be noted that many of the participants expressed their appreciation for the supportive and stable home environments they had. Moreover, the young men frequently talked about the strength and perseverance that was evident in their homes, which fueled their outlooks on life and contributed to their success.

INTRA- AND INTERGENERATIONAL SUCCESS IN THE HOME

The majority of the students tied their success to the achievement of other members in their family. Whether it was educational attainment, maintaining a happy, loving life, keeping consistent employment, or taking care of others, these young men drew inspiration, found the drive to succeed and strength from older siblings, parents, and other family members who served as motivation and models of success. Christian reflects on his older sister and states:

My sister. She's five years older than me and she's been in college. This is actually her last year... She's been the best help I can have... I call her the experiment child because she's seen college and she's gone through high school. She survived and I'm just waiting on her. She tells me every day



My whole family helps me out, my grandma, all my aunts, my dad, my mom, my sister. We all help each other and we all push each other to make sure everybody is successful.



Always be on top of your game so you can help others. That's how I was raised... If you ever see someone struggling, you got to help them.

"get this ready, get this straight, by the time you go to college this is how it's going to be"

For Christian, his older sister's achievement played a crucial role in finding the support and guidance that encourages many first-generation Black and Latino males to succeed in pursuit of college. Although Christian's parents were unable to assist him with schoolwork or college applications, his sister served as a trailblazer, a role model that paved the road and was a source of encouragement for him. Michael shared a similar sentiment about his brothers.

...my brothers, my siblings... every single one of them, is at the college level. My brother is at UCI and my other brother is at Cal State LA... I've always been surrounded by the type of people that want me to go to college to learn new things.

Michael's reference to his siblings' higher education success is not only a source of support and mentoring; it also challenges the narrative that Black and Latino male youth do not have positive role models in their homes and communities or that they do not care about their education. Like many of the participants in this study, Michael has older siblings who are attending or graduating from 4-year universities. This intragenerational success in the home has surrounded Michael with role models, encouragement, and guidance to be a high-achieving young man. More importantly, this finding counteracts deficit notions of young Black and Latino males by reinforcing the success of the young men interviewed and the success that resided in their homes with their brothers, sisters, and parents. Vincent shares this about his brother:

My brother... seeing what he does, where he's at right now, that just motivates me to do better... he's at Harvard... He wants to be in the medicine field. He's my role model.

For Vincent, his brother attending an Ivy League school did not make him feel a sense of pressure; it reinforced the success within his home and the opportunity he had to get support from his brother. While the majority of the young men in this study revealed the educational success in their homes, they also acknowledged the success of their parents and correlated it with their hard work and labor. As Felipe states,

my father... he raised a family of six, he was happy, of course there were struggles but as a

family we pulled through. We all supported each other emotionally.

Although attaining a higher education was a major determinant of achievement in the home, the young men also identified their parents' hard work, dedication to provide, and emotional support as success. This success in the home has motivated the young men to be academically successful and work in community towards the success of everyone in the home.

HELPING AT HOME

Contrary to negative portrayals of Black and Latino males as being void of emotion and compassion, many of the study participants identified serving their families in a supportive and altruistic role as a high priority for them. Some of these young men are responsible for taking care of their siblings while their primary caretakers are at work.

My mom and sister and I have been through some really tough situations. Sometimes our car would break down and we had... me and my sister had to get out and push it and sometimes ... like this one time it happened on a busy street and people were honking and I am like shut up. Yeah, we really work as a good team.

Like other participants in the study, Brandon and his family experienced hardships. However, they were able to work together as a team to confront the difficulties associated with socioeconomic disadvantage. Moreover, Brandon saw his role within his family as a source of support for his sister and mother. This theme of reciprocal and collaborative household relationships emerged from other participant voices as well.

My whole family helps me out, my grandma, all my aunties, my dad, my mom, my sister. We all help each other and we all push each other to make sure everybody is successful and all my cousins and everything. We all help each other, whether it is school or anything we know we got each other's back so that is pretty much all there is.

Other young men considered their achievement across numerous domains as foundational towards building socioeconomic security for themselves and their family. Several young men actually described the term "success" as being able to help and provide for their family members.

If I make it through the highest amount [of education] that I can reach, although it's hard and it's going to be a journey, but making it here out of the place that I live, making out of the society that I live in or changing the society that I'm living and being able to provide for my family...I think success is doing your best to improve all of mankind.

STORIES OF MIGRATION

One of the themes that came up with many of the young men, the Latino participants in particular, were stories of migration. Nearly one of every four Americans is now an immigrant or the child of parents who came from another country. Many of the children in our K-12 schools are challenged daily with formidable tasks of learning English, mastering academic English, learning the culture of their new land, and learning subject matter content—all concurrently.

Many of the Latino young men talked about hearing stories of migration from elders in their families and communities. The migration stories the elders shared with the young men manifested in the home and transferred to a deep sense of pride for them and their families. The stories of their parents', grandparents', and for some, their own migration to the United States, gave the young men a sense of responsibility to succeed, and motivated them to make their parents proud and make the migration journey significant for all. The young men seemed to view the migration of their family members as a sacrifice and honored the fearlessness and courage of their family members to come to a new country with the goal of providing them with an opportunity for a better life. All of this was an inspiration to succeed, graduate high school, and attend college. Alex shared this:

They [my parents] always tell me that they came from Mexico to give me and my siblings a better life so... that's always been a pushing factor for me to succeed... and... trying to get good grades and doing extracurriculars in order to live up to what they expect... They gave up their whole life... so I can't throw it away here.

The story of the migration of Alex's parents has been the driving force for his success. The retelling and deep understanding of the reasons behind his parents' migration has urged and encouraged a number of these young men to be academically successful and not dismiss the opportunity to

achieve, not just for themselves, but for their entire families. Daniel mentioned this:

I was born in Mexico and then I came when I was eight... I struggled... trying to learn the language the first two years. But I kept working hard to figure it out, just like my parents did to bring us to this country.

Although Daniel struggled to learn English, his story of migration conveys the perseverance and determination he has to excel in high school. He found the strength in his home, in his own lived story of migration, to continue despite the language barrier. Now, he is a high-achieving young man who is pursuing higher education. Anthony speaks of his uncle's migration story in this manner:

My uncle... he overcame many obstacles in coming to the United States and I'll say he's a successful Latino male because... he doesn't have... a job that pays well but I think he does a lot to support his family.

While Anthony acknowledges his uncle's laborious and underpaid job, his journey to the United States and the dedication to provide is recognized by Anthony and motivates him to be academically successful. His father's absence is replaced by the support of his uncle and furthers his desire to prevail. Similarly, Emmanuel speaks of his father:

My father, well he started from the bottom... he came from Mexico, he jumped the border [and] married my mom. They were very poor... I feel like I owe it to them... I owe it to myself to work hard because of what they have [had] to sacrifice in order for me to... have clothes... eat, and go to school.

MASCULINITY

Many of the participants we interviewed expressed lived experiences with nondominant forms of masculinity, while simultaneously describing and defying the rigid expectations of what it means to be a man. Hegemonic or dominant masculinity is often characterized by rugged individualism, an uncritical commitment to capitalism and financial success at all cost, sexist and homophobic attitudes and behaviors directed towards women and members of the LGBTQ community, lack of emotional intelligence, and a potentially violent, domineering approach to conflict in relationships and other everyday circumstances. The participants in



Far too often, young people's voices are muted, overlooked, or disregarded in discourses about them, their hopes, dreams, and aspirations.



For me success is about doing something different, doing something big...I didn't want to perpetuate the negative cycle of young African American males

the study seem to be aware of this normative framing of masculinity and mentioned they felt pressure at times to conform to patriarchal standards. However, numerous young men also described success that challenged these narrow definitions of what it meant to be a man, articulating some aspects of what researchers have called “progressive Black and Latino masculinities.” For instance, although hegemonic masculinity requires men to be undaunted stewards of traditional forms of success, the participants offered diverse and nuanced perspectives of their identities and achievement. Throughout the study we heard words and statements like “cry” “my emotions” and “my feelings,” which are not typically part of the narrow depictions of masculinity. Take the student below who is speaking about his sense of self:

So people think being queer is all bad and stuff, but it doesn't make me any less than a person. I'm still strong, brave, smart, determined and I will be successful. I don't care what anyone says.

This student spoke of his queer identity in proud terms and contended that this does not deter him from his goals, regardless of what outsiders might think and say. Cedric, talked about love and religion as core to his identity:

My pastor is happy where he is. He's doing what God has led him to do. He's putting the kids first. He often says there's three things no one can take away from you, love, God, and a good education. That's my opinion too. Nothing wrong with saying you love God.

Some of the young men were also aware of dominant frames and felt pressure to conform to certain patriarchal expectations. However, their awareness of the existence of hegemonic masculinity was not always translated into explicitly aligned dominant behaviors.

Some guys that I know like they feel that they have to go in the wrong direction and be like maybe be tough or mess with people or be violent. But, for me, I want to go to college. I take school serious. I take my sports serious. And, I just want to be a successful person... doing something productive with life....

This student witnessed and seemed to be aware of the draw towards damaging forms of hypermasculinity. He is clearly uninterested in following the same path as some of his peers. However, the young man has

a nuanced enough perspective that he doesn't rely on the simple, dichotomous and punitive narrative of “good” and “bad” men of color. Like other participants, he humanizes other young men in his life, identifies with them, and acknowledges his own potential engagement with hegemonic masculinity. He seems to be gentle with himself and others even while opting out of problematic masculinity.

The students' awareness of dominant masculine frames was not always translated into expressly aligned dominant behaviors. In fact, even those participants who seemed to be more inclined towards seeking out the traditionally masculine forms of success were more concerned with failing the individuals around them than simply obtaining a dominant socioeconomic position. And several talked about the emotional weight that comes with it:

Despite their awareness of normative masculinity, the majority of our participants expressed emotionally intelligent and progressive forms of masculinity. They were empathetic and cared for others.

I think I am good at putting myself in someone else's shoes. If I did something wrong I will sort of know what I did wrong.

Jamison commented:

I am a paraclete so I basically take care of the children of the church while the parents are in the sanctuary and in the services. We take care of the kids and it's made me a lot more caring. Just over the past two years I have been a lot more caring towards people than I ever was.

SUMMARY

As shown, the homes of the Black and Latino men in this study had a tremendous impact on their desire to be academically successful, not only for themselves but for their family and communities. Their homes conveyed vigor and strength that challenged traditional notions of masculinity and demonstrated a dedication to the growth and happiness of all members. The stories of migration were evidence of the sacrifice and hard work parents endured to give the young men an opportunity for a better life—an opportunity they are committed to. The achievement in the home reinforces the guidance and support the young men in this study possess.

The Importance of Community

The influence of community for Black and Latino male students carries major significance in their lives. It goes without stating that most communities provide safe and supportive environments to build and sustain bonds with their peers, family members, and local leaders. It is also clear that some communities have challenging environments filled with drugs, gangs, and violence, which these young men remind us may cause fear and withdrawal. This section highlights how community guides and influences how the young men build resiliency, the desire to help and give back, locate and thrive in supportive spaces, and the feeling of safety from external pressures.

SPACES TO FOSTER THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCY

The Black and Latino male students utilized different spaces in their communities to form their resiliency. Resiliency is central in their development of inner strength to help guide them away from gangs, overcome various struggles, and focus on their social and academic goals. Fostering resiliency is shaped and interpreted differently by each student, but is a vital internal tool for each young man. The young men discussed how they located sources of strength to guide them. One of those sources of support was the church. As Terrance shares:

[Church] strengthens me and I apply that to my life a lot when I go through troubles and hardships

Terrance's church allowed a space to process his personal challenges. In addition to church and faith, athletics was identified as a community source of support for many of the young men. The Black and Latino males participated in different sports in their schools and communities, which allowed them to learn new skills with their peers, as Julio comments below:

If it wasn't for boxing—I wouldn't be the man that I am today because...my community...there was a lot of gangs in middle school. There was a lot of gangs and I was involved with the wrong crowd. But I was always trying to stay away because of

boxing...I don't want to be [like them]...I'm a boxer—I can't be involved in [gangs], I still hanged around [them] because they were my friends, but I wouldn't do what they did.

Julio used a local Boys & Girls Club to develop an interest in boxing. His involvement in boxing helped redirect his focus from gangs and negative peer influences in the community to focusing on his physical and mental health instead. There is a tension because the gang members are his childhood friends, whereas other students are aware of gangs and violence in their community and use their resiliency to avoid the constant temptation to join a gang or crew.

I live next to a park...it's ghetto and gang affiliated place...I've been raised up there and I've seen nothing but family events, that's where I grew up and saw a great place...it's a family.

Although the local park is located in a gang neighborhood, Julio is able to look past the negativity and see the families using the park and see the "great place" that it can be.

I started swimming at the pool...and that gave me a lot of opportunities...it opened up a lot of opportunities, it made me a better person...a better person in the sense of physically and mentally

Mark used the community to build his resiliency to become a "better person." Similar to the other young men in this section who used their church and sports to develop a stronger inner determination to navigate their communities.

HELPING OTHERS AND GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

The students stated that their surrounding communities are an important part of their identity as people of color and contribute to their aspirations to help others. They consistently stated that they care and are invested in their communities, and hold a sense of personal pride and investment by contributing through various formal and informal service opportunities



The students' internal satisfaction with helping others within their communities plays a significant part in their lives.

(e.g., community sports, fund-raising, and Habitat for Humanity). With each activity and formal investment into their community, the students showed additional types of pride and concern for the betterment of their communities. Victor stated:

I am part of the Top Teens Program...we help do Red Cross 4K runs...breast cancer [fundraising]... it helps me learn how to motivate people and how to care for people more...how to make people feel better even though they are having all of these hardships...I definitely think it's had a positive effect on me.

Giving back to the community is an important step for these young men to build their views of success but cement their commitment to helping others.

Feels Internal Responsibility to Help Others

Arturo discusses the loneliness and isolation he experienced in middle school, which inspires him to want to help others, so they do not have similar moments. Arturo said he views helping others as a moral responsibility.

I'm a very helpful person. I really like helping other people because I know how it felt in middle school, I wasn't really successful and I needed help and nobody helped me—so I know that pain of being alone and not knowing who to go

to for help. I always felt that as a person it was my responsibility to help others and that's a motivating factor into my success. Always be on top of your game so you can help others. That's how I was raised in my house. If you ever see someone struggling, you got to help them.

Community Beautification Involvement

The community beautification process helped Ricardo witness how his efforts can have a direct impact on his connection to the community. The experience allows the students to feel successful by helping others.

I volunteered for the neighborhood pride day... it helps you make the community look beautiful, so...our job was to clean the houses, clean fences...being part of that for one day...helped me open my eyes more—it helped me see that I have the power to affect my community and it just helped me connect to others...helped me become successful

The students see the power of their efforts not only transforming the physical characteristics of their community, but also identifying that they play an active role in being responsible for the long-term value of their community and developing networks with others who share similar values in investing in their neighborhoods. The students' internal satisfaction with helping others within their communities plays a significant part in their lives. This investment in the communities helps open students' "eyes" to how they can individually serve others and feel a sense of satisfaction.

In the following example, the student worked with his father teaching sports to adolescents. Brandon thinks about his service as "helping society." These efforts may have lasting effects not only on the participants but also on the young people they serve in their communities.

I started volunteering with my dad...coaching basketball and football at the parks...I like that...I like to see these kids compete...I like to push them to do their best...it makes me feel good... helping society and just knowing I'm doing something to help society.

Brandon shares his enthusiasm for sports with the kids and his father in the parks during different team sports. Both students see their involvement





in the community as efforts to improve their local community, as well as the larger society.

As students in this study continue investing in their communities, they will build their sense of civic engagement. Although the previous examples primarily highlight students' individual efforts, the influence of their parents also contributes to their investment in local, but also global, communities in need. As Zack shares:

My mom...she's a nurse...she works with a program that goes to Africa...they provide medical treatment, dental treatment, provide them with school supplies, so what I do is help pack all the supplies and help organize. This just really shows me...after seeing all their pictures [when] they come back...really showed me that nothing should be taken for granted cause they're really living off like the smallest amount of supplies. After college, I want to give back to countries like that...even around the community—just give back

Zack aspires to helping other communities and countries in need. The photos from his mother's volunteer trip are testament to his direct impact on the lives of people around the globe. These students demonstrate a keen awareness of their impact on the community and also how their involvement helps them grow and become better people.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTIVE SPACES

Black and Latino male students stated the physical spaces (e.g. parks, community centers, churches,

etc.) in their community are needed to cultivate and sustain their social networks. These networks are important due to the peers who are instrumental in their development. Having these “spaces” is crucial to foster mentoring and peer relationships with others who are invested in Black and Latino males' personal well-being. The young men talked about several locations in their communities that were helpful for them throughout Los Angeles County:

The park...I just walk around...and look outside my view and breathe, it helps me relieve my stress as well as ponder in my mind...I get a lot of ideas...it helps my mind breathe and I can think clearly about my homework and what I can do for my work

Frank, quoted above, sees the park as a place to de-stress and collect his thoughts. This calm environment allows him to conceptualize his homework assignments. Other males are involved in structured programs to build relationships with other teenagers and mentors. Ronnie shares his satisfaction at being a part of the Youth Policy Institute.

Youth Policy Institute...is a place where you get to talk to people...other high school students, we're all going to be seniors...they're saying some of the same things that I'm feeling—the same...they really understand...we have been chosen to be a part of this program for one reason

Ronnie appreciates having found a space where others share similar values and feelings about their communities. The Youth Policy Institute provides

Only when we are able to look past their singular constructs of what it means to be successful can we lift the prospects of those on the margins and celebrate the influence on our society writ large.



Many Black and Latino males are frequently left outside of the narrow confines of success, despite behaving in ways that are laudable outside their classrooms.

teenagers an opportunity to foster relationships with their peers. These programs focus on Black and Latino youth, where they can benefit from the individual attention and support to push and reach for larger goals. The young men who were participants in those programs stressed that they were able to form meaningful relationships with program managers, volunteers, and youth workers, but also peers who are not involved in violence or gang activities. The increased personal benefits he acquired may carry over to becoming a self-advocate in higher education.

Edwin from South Los Angeles stated sports and recreational areas are critical for his health and overall well-being:

I like basketball...it helps me out...to get out my stress...to get my mind off of things...and it's huge emotionally [relief]...it's like a huge advantage for me to keep off the bad things to the side...it helps me not focus on violence in my neighborhood or gangs

Edwin used basketball to avoid gangs and violence in his neighborhood. Other students are members of scholarship programs, where they receive pre-college counseling and participate in a summer college preparation program. These programs help supplement the college information the students are building in high school.

South Central Scholars, a program centered towards minority youth in the urban community... it's like a scholarship, but they have a summer program at USC...it helps you academically and they teach you how to work

Mario highlights the role of the scholarship program in providing access to social and navigational capital, to receive job training and also to understand how to use the new information to maneuver new spaces.

Safety/External Pressures

One of the challenges all of these young men may face are the social dangers in their given neighborhoods. The importance of safety and an escape from community pressures is vital to identifying and supporting for the young men in this study. The Black and Latino males talked about how such spaces provided a distraction from negative experiences they sometimes witness. Other students are able to learn from close-aged peers or older adults and build connections which may not be available at home.

Kenneth, in the example below, shares how he builds various forms of capital through relationships with older adults on the basketball courts. He is able to learn how the world works and how to anticipate new challenges in their communities.

The gym. I go play basketball...[the older Black and Brown men] they keep me away from any negativity in the streets. People that are older than me, talk to me let me know how the world would already [work] outside of school.

Luis offers an example of how his local elementary school provides a safe environment to avoid violence in his community.

And [the elementary school] would distract me from everything negative going on, it's a bad neighborhood [where I live], there's always something violent going on. I would go to the elementary school to play basketball by myself... sometimes I would go run next to the school because I felt safe next to the school...

SUMMARY

- Students used personal experiences and environment (e.g., churches, community pools, Boys & Girls Clubs) to build their resilience and focus on their long-term goals of not being enticed into gangs and/or violence;
- The young men volunteered in multiple formal and informal programs through school clubs, local churches, or community centers. These opportunities opened new perspectives and understanding of their role in improving individual communities;
- The students used local parks, sports, school-based programs, and community organizations to avoid violence and gangs in their communities. These spaces provided either opportunities to focus on physical outlets (through sports), emotional well-being (self-confidence), or to build friendships with like-minded peers; and
- The importance of older male figures and involvement in organized programs provided a "sense of safety" from potential involvement in trouble. The shared understanding between Black and Latino male high school students and older members of the community heightened the students' eagerness to form strong bonds with others who understand their trials and tribulations and to have a larger network of positive figures in their lives.

Recommendations

SCHOOLS

The school section captured the ways that school personnel and organizations supported students at the various school sites. However, not every student or school had access to the same resources. Schools striving to support Black and Latino males should assess the ways these students are being afforded opportunities to learn. Drawing from the voices of the young men that we spoke to, the research team recommends six ways for schools to further support Black and Latino male students.

1. Teacher-student relationships beyond the classroom. School administrators, teachers, and staff should make the effort to learn about the homes of these young men and the cultural wealth they hold, in order to understand students beyond the classroom. While we understand that teachers have lessons to plan, assignments to grade, and lives of their own, the young men in our study praised the teachers and staff who cared about them, invested in them, went the extra mile to get to know them, inquired about their personal lives, and even took on mentoring roles in their lives. Schools serve as a second home for many of our participants, and as such, school administrators, teachers, and staff should be intentional in developing a culture of care, concern, and commitment to young men academically, socially and emotionally.

2. School and community organizations: providing social and emotional support. Students were exposed to diverse organizations, including community-based organizations at their school sites that met many of their needs. The organizations that were the most influential provided multidimensional support that kept students engaged in school, sustained and enhanced their interest in academics, and alleviated stress for students. We recommend that school organizations and community based organizations work in sync to consider the ways that provides students holistic support. A number of the young men spoke to the challenging home lives and communities they lived in. Mental health supports can make a notable difference for young men of color.

In addition, organizations may also need to partner with other organizations and resources to ensure that students' social and emotional needs are met.

3. Developing a school culture of success. Throughout the research, most students referenced an organization or person that contributed to their success. Missing from students' narratives were the ways that schools, as a whole, support students. Only one of the school sites was continuously referenced as having a school culture that contributed to student success. The school that developed a culture and support system for academic success encouraged all students to do well in school. Additionally, students remarked that the school provided care and support that went beyond a few individuals but was embedded in the organization of the school. This example provides the possibility of having a school culture that provides a framework for students to be successful. For young males of color to be successful, school policies, practices, and procedures need to be geared toward

Throughout the research, most students referenced an organization or person that contributed to their success.





What became quite clear in this work was that success needs to be reimagined in schools.

the success of all students, not heavily centered on punitive actions, and connected to school-home-community engagement.

4. Challenge traditional notions of masculinity for Black and Latino males.

Educational practitioners and school leaders need to celebrate a shift towards progressive masculinity and acknowledge the humanness and feelings of these young men; their desire to love and be loved, and the care they express for their families, friends, and other loved ones. They need to challenge stereotypes about young Black and Latino men in the classroom and create safe classrooms where students are willing and comfortable expressing their feelings. Recognizing the prevalence of diverse masculinities is critical in creating a caring school climate for males of color. The young men in this study were not afraid to show their vulnerabilities and emotions and challenge rigid ideas of masculinity.

5. Recognize Black and Latino male resiliency.

Resiliency and altruism were evident throughout the voices of the participants. Administrators, teachers, and policymakers would be wise to acknowledge the grit, perseverance, and life situations of Black and Latino males and provide support services that amplify the positive outcomes associated with these characteristics. For instance, teachers can utilize pedagogy that invites students to reflect upon their own life challenges, tie these to the experiences of others, and recognize the strength inherent in facing difficulties. Administrators and policymakers can look to develop policies regarding attendance, testing, and other demands associated with student life. Black and Latino males serve numerous roles within and beyond their tasks as students.

6. Rethinking school success. While many of the young men in our study held grade point averages that were 3.0 and above, not all did. While many of the young men in the study were taking rigorous college preparatory courses, not all did. Nonetheless, what became quite clear in this work was that success needs to be reimagined in schools. All of the young men in this study showed uncanny promise and leadership, participated in extracurricular activities, helped their peers at school, and demonstrated success in a multitude of ways. Moreover, it is important for schools to help personnel see the numerous ways that many young men of color manifest their brilliance, intellect, and promise.

COMMUNITY

The value and influence of community on young people cannot be overstated. According to our data, communities have a significant impact on the lives of young Black and Latino men in this study. The young men informed us about how they searched for mentors and like-minded peers in local parks, community centers, churches, and informal and organized sports, and through volunteer experiences. These mentors and peers serve to help the Black and Latino males focus on positivity instead of being drawn into violence and gangs in their surrounding communities. Among the recommendations that we would make are the following:

- Providing Black and Latino males opportunities to volunteer in structured school or community based programs to broaden their interest and involvement to positively change their community would be vital. Efforts tied to community enhancement and improvement seem to have particular appeal to the young men we spoke to in our work. Throughout our study, the young men talked about the levels of satisfaction and enjoyment they received from ventures centered on giving back and helping others.
- Legislators may want to consider additional investments in local parks and gang prevention programs focused on Black and Latino males to steer students from gang involvement. Throughout our conversations, the young men talked about the pervasiveness of gangs in their community. They discussed having to steer clear of gangs, the need to be aware of particular neighborhoods, and talked about why structured afterschool activities were important for them to be able to remain at school premises after hours.
- Throughout our interviews the young men talked about the critical role that sports played in their success. Thus, any programmatic efforts that focus on sports and youth development should not only remain in place but should be provided additional supports. Elementary and middle schools should provide afterhours sports or community building programs for local Black and Latino teenagers. Moreover, while our participants talked about the importance of sports, they also said that activities that offered mentoring young men in sports were important as well.

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SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

Pasadena Blair High School

Blair High School is located in Pasadena, California, just 15 minutes from downtown Los Angeles and is considered to be a more affluent city; the median household income in Pasadena is \$68,172 (2013) compared to the national household average of \$51,939. The city also boasts the highest number of private schools per capita due to a court ruling. In 1970, a court ordered the city's once well-regarded school district to desegregate. Rather than have their kids go to school with the mostly Black kids from the Northwest, the city's upper class and wealthy people pulled their children out of the public school system. Blair High and Middle School is an authorized International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Program, which provides the framework for an integrated and international philosophy that is supported by academic rigor and opportunities to explore and learn about the world outside the immediate community. The IBMYP was authorized at Blair IB School in October 2002. Blair High and Middle School was authorized to offer the IB Diploma Program in April of 2007. Blair High School is one of 28 schools in the Pasadena Unified School District. According to U.S. News, Blair High School is unranked.

■ Total Student Body: 1,153

■ Racial Breakdown:

- ◆ Black/African American: 25%
- ◆ Hispanic: 56%
- ◆ Asian: 8%
- ◆ White: 8%
- ◆ Two or more: 3%

■ Free and Reduced Lunch Assistance:

- ◆ Eligible: 59%
- ◆ Not Eligible: 31%
- ◆ Reduced Price: 10%

■ Performance Index (API) (2013):

- ◆ Schoolwide: 904
- ◆ Black/African American: 227
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 498
- ◆ Socioeconomically disadvantaged: 698

■ Weighted 3-Year API (2011–2013):

- ◆ Schoolwide: 710
- ◆ Black/African American: 696
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 682
- ◆ Socioeconomically disadvantaged: 680

Westchester Enriched Sciences Magnet High School

Westchester Enriched Sciences Magnet High School (WESM) is a public magnet school within the Los Angeles Unified School district located in the Westchester region of Los Angeles County. The majority of students at WESM are People of Color with nearly 75% identifying as African American and close to 20% identifying as Latino/a. Despite the school demographics, WESM is actually located in a historically and predominantly white neighborhood in Los Angeles situated near the Los Angeles International Airport and Loyola Marymount University. Black males account for 40% of the student population. Historically, WESM has enrolled one of the largest black male student populations in the state. Almost half of the students in the school are labeled socio-economically disadvantaged. In recent years the school has restructured and currently consists of a magnet school model with a health and science focus. The shift to a magnet focus has not been without controversy within the community. Despite this fact, within WESM warm staff and teachers work tirelessly with the students. A counselor runs the college readiness center and consistently encourages students to absorb and engage with information about higher education.

■ Total Student Body: 1,247

■ Racial Breakdown:

- ◆ Black/African American: 72.9%
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 16.7%
- ◆ White: 5.7%
- ◆ APIA: 2.5%
- ◆ American Indian: 0.7%
- ◆ Two or more races: 1.5%

■ Free and Reduced Lunch Assistance:

- ◆ Eligible: 38%
- ◆ Not Eligible: 56%
- ◆ Reduced Price: 6%

■ Growth API (2013)

- ◆ Schoolwide: 704
- ◆ Black/African American: 679
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 741
- ◆ Socioeconomically Disadvantaged: 686

■ Weighted 3-Year API (2011–2013)

- ◆ Schoolwide: 689
- ◆ Black/African American: 662
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 734
- ◆ Socioeconomically Disadvantaged: 674

King Drew Magnet High School

King Drew Magnet High School of Medicine and Science (King-Drew) is a competitive magnet school that serves over 1,500 primarily low-income Latino and African American students. King-Drew excels in providing students a competitive academic environment, where almost 70 percent of the students are college eligible (A-G requirements) and is well above the district average for high school completion rates. Apart from King-Drew's academic curriculum, the school has strategic partnerships with multiple hospitals and clinics throughout the community, including UCLA Hospital and the Veterans Affairs Clinics, to provide additional learning opportunities for students. The school is located in a low-to-middle-class suburb of Los Angeles, where the median household income in 2014 was \$33,678 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Lastly, less than 40 percent of the students are males and over 80% of all students have high aspirations to attend some postsecondary education institution in the future.

■ Total Student Body: 1,563

■ Racial Breakdown:

- ◆ Black/African American: 45%
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 53%
- ◆ White: 1%

■ Free and Reduced Lunch Assistance:

- ◆ Eligible: 70%
- ◆ Not Eligible: 21%
- ◆ Reduced Price: 9%

■ Growth API (2013):

- ◆ Schoolwide: 1,226
- ◆ Black/African American: 603
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 609
- ◆ Socioeconomic disadvantaged: 1,031

■ Weighted 3-Year API (2011–2013):

- ◆ Schoolwide: 784
- ◆ Black/African American: 763
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 805
- ◆ Socioeconomic disadvantaged: 785

Long Beach Polytechnic High School

Long Beach Polytechnic High School in California has a history of being recognized for its competitive academic and athletic program. This is evidenced by the school consistently being recognized as one of the top 100 high schools in the nation by Newsweek magazine. In 2011, Poly was identified by Sports Illustrated as the top athletic program in the nation. The juxtaposition of competitive athletic and academic programs creates a unique school culture that students are tasked with navigating. With a student population comprised of more of 4,400 students, not only is the school one of the largest in the state, but also historically the school is one of the most diverse schools in the nation. The school is located in a low-to-middle class city where the median income in 2012 was \$47,837 and the current unemployment is 9.7%. The school is comprised of a number of small learning communities (academies) that track students based on interests or by admission requirements. It is within this context that Black and Latino males are seeking to achieve success.

Total Student Body: 4,464

Racial Breakdown:

- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 36.6%
- ◆ Asian: 17.8%
- ◆ Black/African American: 23.2%
- ◆ White: 11.6%
- ◆ Pacific Islander: 2.3%,
- ◆ Filipino: 6.3%
- ◆ Two or More: 1.5%

Free and Reduced Lunch:

- ◆ Eligible: 50%
- ◆ Not Eligible: 44%
- ◆ Reduced Price: 7%

Growth API (2011-2013):

- ◆ Schoolwide: 764
- ◆ Black/African American: 693
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 717
- ◆ Socioeconomically disadvantaged: 710

Weighted 3-Year API (2011–2013):

- ◆ Schoolwide: 753
- ◆ Black/African American: 683
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 700
- ◆ Socioeconomically disadvantaged: 695

George Washington Preparatory High School

George Washington Preparatory High School is a public 4-year high school in the Westmont section of unincorporated Los Angeles County, California and was founded in 1926. The school has a Los Angeles address but is not located in the city limits of Los Angeles. It serves many areas in South Los Angeles and unincorporated areas around South Los Angeles, including Athens, West Athens, and Westmont. In addition it serves the LAUSD section of Hawthorne. It was the location for a 1986 TV movie entitled Hard Lessons, depicting Denzel Washington as the new principal, who sets out to rid the school of gang violence and drugs and restore educational values to the school. A famous former principal is George McKenna, whom Denzel Washington portrayed in the movie Hard Lessons.

At this site, the gold mine is the college center. Students walk in and out of the college center for academic and personal advice, to study, or simply to hang out with the college counselor and other peers during lunch. Brochures for programs like Upward Bound, posters advertising Historically Black Colleges and Universities, public and private universities, summer programs, and scholarship opportunities are laid out on tables and posted on the walls of the office. Pictures of students who have been admitted to colleges are displayed on the wall with their letters of acceptance. The college center, as well as the young men's caring teachers and counselors, are crucial to the overall success of the students at Washington Prep.

Total Student Body: 1,465

Racial Breakdown:

- ◆ Black/African American: 55%
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 44%
- ◆ Other: 1%

Free and Reduced Lunch Assistance:

- ◆ Eligible: 78%
- ◆ Not Eligible: 19%
- ◆ Reduced Price: 3%

Growth API (2013):

- ◆ Schoolwide: 590
- ◆ Black/African American: 550
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 632
- ◆ Socioeconomically disadvantaged: 590

Weighted 3-Year API (2011–2013)

- ◆ Schoolwide: 572
- ◆ Black/African American: 543
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 601
- ◆ Socioeconomically disadvantaged: 571

Social Justice Humanitas Academy

Social Justice Humanitas Academy (SJHA) is a small public high school located in a predominately low-income Latino community in the San Fernando Valley. About five years ago, local teachers developed the school as a social justice themed, teacher-led, and student centered campus. At the heart of the school is a campus-wide culture that contributes to student success, which has benefited its Latino and Black male students. The school provides support systems that goes beyond a "few caring adults" but instead involves the campus community, encouraging student academic success through a social justice mission. School leadership, teachers, and staff provide care and support exceeds beyond the bell and job duties. Instead, adult interactions with youth provide academic, social, emotional, and personalized support that students credited as leading to their success in school. In addition, the school has clubs and organizations; partners with local universities, community based organizations, local businesses, and organizations that meet students' academic, justice-oriented, artistic, and other needs. Lastly, the school has received recognition from the district for student success and community engagement.

Total Student Body: 506

Racial Breakdown:

- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 95.5%
- ◆ Black/African American: 2.8%
- ◆ White: 1.4%
- ◆ American Indian: 0.2%

Free and Reduced Lunch:

- ◆ Eligible: 68%
- ◆ Not Eligible: 24%
- ◆ Reduced Price: 7%

Growth API (2013)

- ◆ Schoolwide: 708
- ◆ Black/African American: 551
- ◆ Hispanic/Latino: 715
- ◆ Socioeconomically Disadvantaged: 718



UCLA Black Male Institute

Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

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UNITED WAY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA AND SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY



GUIDE TO RECRUITING BLACK MEN AS MENTORS FOR BLACK BOYS APRIL 2014

ERIC K. GRIMES, CO-FOUNDER

AAKT CONCEPTS LLC

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.

United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey

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ABOUT UNITED WAY OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA AND SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY

United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey's mission is to harness, leverage and strategically invest the collective power of donors, advocates and volunteers, to drive measurable results that improve the lives of people in our region.

United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey is the one organization with the ability to bring the business community, organized labor, public and non-profit sectors together to identify critical needs across our region and collectively address complex issues to drive real, measurable, systemic change that ensures children succeed in school, families are financially stable and all community members have their health and basic needs met. United Way's expertise is in uniting, problem solving and driving collective action to amplify the power of the individual and achieve what no one person can achieve alone.

Overview of United Way's Greater Philadelphia Mentoring Partnership

United Way's Greater Philadelphia Mentoring Partnership (GPMP) is elevating mentoring practices throughout the region to ensure access for children and youth to caring and supportive mentors. Our mission is to foster a mentor-rich environment and a culture of high-quality mentoring and mentor-related volunteering. GPMP has three goals:

1. To ensure that mentoring and related volunteer programs meet best practice guidelines¹
2. To prepare adults and youth to develop meaningful relationships
3. To develop and support mentoring and related volunteer models that address the needs of underserved youth, particularly those with Early Warning Indicators² for school drop-out

Our Focus on Mentoring and Black Male Achievement:

United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey (UWGPSNJ) has served as the regional affiliate of MENTOR./The National Mentoring Partnership since 1989, and in that capacity has served as a resource for mentors and more than 85 mentoring programs throughout the southeastern PA region. UWGPSNJ has been concerned with the issues of recruiting African-American men as mentors to improve the outcomes of young men of color since 2006 as a result of the Mentoring Providers Network sharing that two of their biggest challenges are: 1) effective engagement and retention of Black male teenagers age 12 and above, and 2) recruiting African-American men as mentors to work with Black males in their programs.



ABOUT AAKT CONCEPTS LLC

Eric K. Grimes, Co-Founder & President

AAKT (pronounced Act) Concepts stands for Action, Advocacy, Knowledge, and Training Concepts. Our signature initiative, *Reaching Out For The Brothers: Concepts * Ideas * Strategies for the Effective Development of Black Men and Boys*, is a comprehensive initiative that engages in action, advocacy, knowledge development and training to authentically and accurately articulate Black male experiences in an effort to empower young Black men and boys, as well as those who work with or on behalf of them.

Services Include:

- Concept and Idea Development, Enhancement and Amplification Strategies
- Professional Development and Staff Training
- Group Facilitation, Seminars and Workshops
- Program Development and Management
- Organizational Capacity Building and Technical Assistance
- Curriculum, Toolkit, Guidebook, Documentation and Virtual Interactive Platform Development

Select Projects and Activities:

- **Program Development Consultant** – provide consultation and assistance to program staff and management of federally-funded REXO re-entry services for ex-offenders and program service delivery to male youth, ages 16 – 19, in an afterschool program designed to help them avoid truancy and achieve academic goals.
- **Technical Assistance Consultant** – Technical assistance provider, workshop presenter and guidebook author for organizations endeavoring to establish or enhance mentoring programs targeting males of color.
- **On Air Radio Host, WURD 900AM** – Weekly co-host of ‘Wake Up With WURD’ drive time morning program (Wednesdays) on Pennsylvania’s only African American owned talk radio station.
- **Lecturer/Instructor, Psycho-educational Interactions with Black Males** – created course taught at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education (since Fall 2007) designed to prepare future and current educators, counselors, social workers and other professionals to better serve and empower the young Black males they will engage.
- **Facilitator, Non-Profit Institute** – Technical assistance provider and workshop presenter for various seminars and institutes sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania’s Netter Center for Community Engagement regarding non-profit administration and management.

Select Affiliations:

- **Chair, Education Committee** – Mayor’s Commission for African American Males (Philadelphia)
- **Member, Advisory Network (Planning Phase)** – Open Society Black Male Achievement Leadership and Sustainability Institute
- **Member, Steering Committee** – United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey’s Philly Roots Initiative
- **Founding Member and Convener, Steering Committee** – Black CAPs Philly Initiative

GUIDE TO RECRUITING BLACK MEN AS MENTORS FOR BLACK BOYS

Introduction

The difficulties faced by black male youth in their quest for educational success are well documented. Black men are uniquely positioned to help guide these youth to educational success and a productive future and **through** the barriers that stand in their way. But there are almost always more black boys to be mentored than black men to mentor them in formal mentoring programs. This guide will help mentoring programs engage in a productive and inclusive recruitment campaign by doing the following:

- **Addressing program readiness** – Section One discusses the key idea of serving black male youth in a mentoring program that acknowledges and addresses the black male youth experience in a culturally relevant way. It also reviews the practice implications of such a program – black men are more willing to be engaged and retained in programs that are speaking to the black male experience, however varied, and black male youth are more successful. This section asks programs to assess whether they are ready to address the black male experience in their mentoring program.
- **Providing guidance on an effective social marketing campaign** – Section Two will detail the who, what, to whom, and where to implement an effective social marketing campaign to recruit black men to mentor. Practice tools and case studies are provided for programs to learn apply these strategies.



Context

Recruiting enthusiastic and appropriate adults as mentors is an important component of a successful mentoring program. Developing a clear mentoring model and instituting an effective social marketing campaign are keys to this and we intend for this guide to provide program developers with ways to engage African American men to make a difference for our communities.

Whether natural or formal,³ a mentor can greatly impact the lives of young people from all walks of life:

- Formal mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee (MENTOR, 2005).
- **Informal/Natural mentoring** consists of a relationship with an older friend, relative, community member, or colleague that provides encouragement and support. This mentoring relationship occurs when there is a deliberate intent to develop, grow or impart wisdom through conversation and need not exist in a formal setting.

But while a growing number of youth have mentors, there are more ‘unmatched’ youth who could benefit from having a mentoring relationship. This unmet need constitutes the mentoring gap and recruiting Black men to serve as mentors to Black boys is a challenging, but worthwhile effort.

CALL TO ACTION

You: A Guide **TO & THROUGH** for Black Boys

All youth deserve a clear path **to** healthy adulthood, as well as formal and natural supports to help them get **through** the obstacles and challenges faced as they follow this path! But on the road to healthy adulthood, many Black boys and young men are subjected to three major shortcomings in their development and socialization:

1. **Socialization into Insignificance** – ineffective training and preparation of young males regarding the expected traits, attitudes and behaviors of positive Black manhood relative to their cultural experiences and community needs.
2. **Limited Connections, Access and Networks** – inadequate access to sufficient adult male role models after whom to pattern behaviors, and to the social and opportunity networks that aid success.
3. **Improper and Insufficient Tools, Skills and Abilities** – ineffective skill development and educational preparation which limits their ability to deal with the particular societal and personal issues they face, and those faced by the communities in which they reside.

The good news is that there are organizations and individuals positioned to help Black boys overcome many of the obstacles to educational, social and career success and willing to provide support. Through well developed and strategic interactions and engagements, these individuals and organizations can:

- help Black boys create and develop a *healthy identity*
- build up their *belief in themselves* and those around them to believe they can make it
- facilitate the *skill development* and *social connections* needed for them to make it

But are they ready? In order to do this, Black boys need to connect with concerned adults and mentors who can help them chart a powerful course into the future and navigate through the challenges and obstacles in their way.

Providing guidance ‘**to**’ and ‘**through**’ for Black boys is a collective responsibility requiring collective work, especially for youth in socially, economically and racially marginalized communities.⁴ A qualified and equipped mentor could help guide a Black boy ‘to’ and ‘through’ on the journey to healthy adulthood and yes, we’re talking to you!

This guide is designed to assist your organization in developing and implementing an outreach, recruitment and retention strategy that speaks to Black men who would serve as mentors to Black boys. Though overcoming the mentoring gap and recruiting men to serve as mentors to boys has been deemed an overwhelming challenge, this guide will offer a framework and suggestions on how programs can effectively recruit, recognize and retain mentors. It will specifically focus on this challenge from the perspective of the demographic of greatest need – recruiting Black men to mentor Black boys.

In it we propose the **Black MENToring Social Marketing Campaign** whereby we:

- Offer a mentoring model that speaks to the specific needs of Black boys and adolescents, with a particular focus on academic and educational success
- Identify/Utilize effective social marketing elements of prior campaigns that had success targeting Black men
- Apply the concept of Positive Deviance as a basis for designing a campaign to recruit Black men as mentors for Black Boys

Whether formal or informal, mentoring is great opportunity and this guide is another tool for helping your organization and program assist Black men and boys to realize its full benefit.

SECTION 1 – Program Readiness

Healthy Adulthood, Educational Success and Black Males

Though all youth are deserving, far too many black boys and young men face significant challenges attaining the outcomes desired and supports needed on the path to becoming a healthy adult. Additionally, current ineffective socialization and education processes “prepare” Black male youth for systematic disconnection from basic life milestones like high school graduation, post-secondary education and employment.

School readiness and early success serve as springboards upon which future academic and career achievement may rely. However, only 51% of poor children (3-to-5-years old) are enrolled in organized child care or an early education program.⁵ Considering that low-income families are disproportionately Black and Brown, it doesn’t bode well for the development of young Black boys who already face a *school readiness gap* before one can even consider an *academic achievement gap*. Additionally, African-American boys are over 4½ times more likely to be expelled from Pre-K programs. Thus, Black males are underserved and disproportionately removed from critical early childhood educational programming.



As Black boys move further along the “educational” pipeline, in an era of high stakes testing, they are being further left behind. The high pressure for many schools to make Annual Yearly Progress has led to educational approaches that further marginalize black males in the education system⁶:

- Δ Over the past decade the reading scores of black males in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grade have increased by 8%, but are still considerably lower compared to their white, Latino and Asian peers. In 4th, 8th and 12th grades, Black males without disabilities had lower reading scores and grade proficiency than White Males with disabilities.
- Δ Zero tolerance discipline policies that facilitate how urban school systems enforce punitive consequences for simple misconduct disproportionately impact students of color, particularly Black boys. These school policies and/or practices make them inherently vulnerable and susceptible to arrest, probation, or other forms of juvenile custody. In school systems, this is institutionalized by the overrepresentation of young Black male students in suspension and expulsion rates:
 - African Americans comprise only 17% of public schools but constitute 34% of out of school suspensions and are 4 times more likely to be reported to police by school officials
 - In urban areas like NYC, Chicago and Philadelphia, Latino and African-Americans constituted almost 98% of public school arrests, with males accounting for the majority of those arrested in each group
- Δ Only 52% of Black males graduated from high school in 2010, but locally (Philadelphia) that number was only 24%, as reported by the Schott Foundation.

For those young men who are unable to navigate the educational pipeline and end up in the punitive juvenile and criminal justice systems, the challenges and barriers are even more significant. And if a young Black boy is able to successfully navigate this reality and make it to graduation, post-secondary educational readiness, access, and retention present a set of unique challenges as well. Unfortunately, this population experiences some of the greatest barriers to college matriculation and degree completion.

According to the work of Dr. Shaun Harper⁷:

- Δ Black male students are often comparatively less prepared than are others for the rigors of college level academic work
- Δ Black male college completion rates are lowest among all racial/ethnic groups in U.S. higher education
- Δ Black men's degree attainment across all levels of postsecondary education is alarmingly low, especially in comparison to their same-race female counterparts

While the statistics paint a daunting picture, proper interventions and supports like mentoring that address the early warning indicators and facilitate effective transitions throughout a child's educational career can help Black males navigate through these obstacles.

Mentoring Makes A Difference...

Research distinguishes two types of mentoring relationships: instrumental and psychosocial⁸:

- **Instrumental mentoring** relationships are problem focused and tend to help individuals reach particular goals
- **Psychosocial mentoring** relationships are process oriented and focus on modifying the personal qualities of the protégé

Positive youth development outcomes associated with mentoring include gains in self-esteem and self-confidence, increases in academic achievement, reduced likelihood of initiating drug use and lower rates of recidivism among juvenile delinquents⁹. Even for youth displaying higher levels of risk factors, quality mentoring relationships helped them do significantly better than youth in the non-mentored comparison group on a number of important outcome measures.

A recent study of mentoring's effect on higher risk youth suggests that those youth in quality matches reported fewer depressive symptoms, greater acceptance by their peers, more positive beliefs about their ability to succeed in school, and better grades in school.¹⁰ Important to the successful matches were effective early match training and consistent support for mentors, which facilitated more frequent, higher quality and longer-lasting relationships with mentees.

When young people are mentored well:

- 98% stay in school
- 98% do not become teen parents
- 85% don't use drugs
- 98% avoid gang participation

National CARES Mentoring Movement

The key messages of the report were twofold:

- Mentoring programs can be beneficial for youth with a broad range of backgrounds and characteristics, and
- Tailoring mentor training and supports based on the specific risks youth face has the potential to produce even stronger benefits.

It is becoming clear that effective mentoring matters! But it is also important to understand how gender, race, class and ethnicity issues might influence the mentoring relationship since ineffective mentoring can have significant impacts on youth outcomes.

...Race and Gender Matter!

Mentoring's Difference Maker: Sustained, Quality Relationships

Rhodes and Grossman examined whether the effects of mentoring relationships varied as a function of their duration. Youth in matches that terminated within six months suffered larger drops in feelings of self-worth and perceived scholastic competence than youth in the study who had never been matched with a mentor. Youth in matches that lasted 12 months or more reported significantly higher levels of self-worth, social acceptance and scholastic competence. They also reported that their relationships with their parents had improved, school had become more rewarding and their drug and alcohol use had declined. *Grossman and Rhodes, 2002.*

Since negative and ineffective mentoring is not harmless and negative mentoring experiences can have negative effects on the youth mentored, mentor recruitment, matching and relationship quality are essential. Youth who were in relationships that lasted a year or longer reported improvements in academic, psychosocial, and behavioral outcomes; youth who were in relationships that terminated within 3 months reported drops in self-worth and perceived scholastic competence¹¹.

Mentoring authority Jean Rhodes notes that, in general, girls want mentors who talk with them (psychosocial), whereas boys want mentors who engage in activities with them (instrumental). Thus, when mentoring programs focus on instrumental mentoring, males may derive more benefit than females. When mentoring programs focus on psychosocial mentoring, females might benefit more.

In one study, when gender was taken into account, greater benefits for same-race matches were found - compared to boys in cross race matches, boys in same race matches

were more likely to demonstrate increases in academic competence and self-esteem; girls in same race matches compared to girls in cross-race matches were more likely to show increases in schools value and self-esteem¹². Race and ethnicity are also critical factors in mentoring relationships :

- Because youth differ in the perceived salience of their ethnic/racial identities, they may have different experiences with mentors from the same or different ethnic backgrounds. In looking at the natural and formal mentoring relationships of late adolescents and college-aged ethnic minorities, **cultural differences** seem to play a role in the expectations, attainment and experience of mentoring. When youth choose their own mentors, they tend to seek people of the same race or ethnic backgrounds.
- It is possible that youth and families who value **collectivism** are better served by mentoring programs that foster relationships of the child and the various adults in his life, the mentor and the child within the family, or between the mentor and the family as a whole.
- **Cultural mistrust** may negatively affect mentoring relationships, especially in their early stages, when group stereotypes are more prevalent. Because of cultural mistrust, minority youth in academic contexts may be less likely to seek out white mentors.

A Look at Volunteerism and Mentoring for African Americans:

- 35% of African Americans report that they engage in some form of volunteerism, averaging about 4.5 hours per week
- Though the level of Black volunteerism is low overall, Blacks who volunteer are more engaged in mentoring than other groups of volunteers.
- African-American men are less involved than their female counterparts in volunteerism.
- Though males are less likely to volunteer than females, males and females mentor at similar rates.
- A substantial amount of mentoring happens through religious affiliations

**MENTOR and the Corporation for
National and Community Service**

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT FOR BLACK BOYS AND MEN

As seen, there are interpersonal, community and societal level challenges that make the acquisition of basic youth development outcomes and educational success more challenging for Black boys, making it necessary for them to employ an additional, uniquely defined set of skills and assets just to make it in society. It is this set of unique circumstances and challenges Black boys endure, many of them coalescing around issues encountered within education and schooling environments, beginning early in the developmental cycle, that calls out for why Black boys need critical and effective mentorship delivered to them by programs and individuals able to guide them through these transitions and barriers. Yet, one of the key shortcomings in many initiatives designed to work with Black males is the presumption that a general or universal model applies to the specific needs and challenges facing them.

Many mentoring and youth development programs are not adequately ready and equipped to engage Black boys and offer the level of support necessary to make a real difference for them on the journey to healthy adulthood and educational success. Indeed, this inadequate fit is a possible reason behind some of the weak and mixed findings in the mentoring, academic achievement and youth development research, particularly for low income, Black males.

A proper corrective lens must be chosen, and from this perspective, core to effective work with Black boys facing challenges due to their racial group membership (Black), gender (male), and/or class status (poor) is a willingness to engage this reality and to utilize frameworks that identify and addresses the challenges associated with this reality, not ones that ignore them.

The Integrative Model of Developmental Competencies in Minority Children (IMDCMC)¹⁴ notes that issues at the intersection of social class, culture, ethnicity and race matter for the development of minority children and must not be omitted from youth development conceptual models. Gender and age dynamics further complicate these developmental models and are often not considered in conceptual frameworks. Social position (race, class, ethnicity, gender) and social stratification (i.e. racism, prejudice, discrimination, oppression, segregation, environmental factors, schooling, neighborhood, etc.) considerations must be at the core of conceptual models, and not at the margins.

As we expect youth to be school or program ready, programs and mentors must be ready to effectively engage Black boys and young men, embracing the call to guide them ‘to’ and ‘through’. Mentoring programs that ignore this reality, and do not fully consider the needs of Black men and boys in their outreach, recruitment, matching and retention efforts may cause more harm than good for Black boys. Thus, before engaging in a recruitment and outreach campaign for Black men to serve as mentors for Black boys, it is important for your organization or program to (re)consider its mentoring approach. It is important to assess its readiness to dive deep into the issues that impact this group and assess whether what it is prepared to offer fits the needs and addresses the realities Black boys and men face. The following assessment tool, **‘Is This Work For You?’ Readiness to Engage Report Card**, may be helpful to guide the assessment process.



Assessment Tool 1: ‘Is This Work For You?’ Readiness to Engage Report Card¹⁵

The publication *Momentum: Sustaining Efforts to Improve Life Outcomes among African American Males* identifies 5 attributes common in effective Black male work.

Please have a representative number of stakeholders and staff members complete the assessment items below. At a later point, convene participants in a group session to discuss and provide an overall rating for your organization/program and discuss ways to enhance your ratings moving forward.

5 Attributes Essential to Effective Black Male Work	How close are you to having this attribute? 1 to 5: 1 “long way to go” 5 “already there”	Evidence
Engage Work through a Race + Gender Lens: A racial equity lens should be at the fore while analyzing problems, looking for solutions, and defining success. A Race + Gender lens goes a step farther, realizing that Black males experience their lives as black and male at the same time.	Rating:	Yes ☐ No ☐ In what ways is this evident in your program’s work?
Notes/Discussion:		
Acknowledge the Injustice of Unequal Race and Gender Outcomes: Effective black males work is informed by an analysis that understands the poor outcomes black males face in nearly every category of analysis and asserts that such disparities are not commensurate with a just and equitable society.	Rating:	Yes ☐ No ☐ In what ways is this evident in your program’s work?
Notes/Discussion:		

5 Attributes Essential to Effective Black Male Work	How close are you to having this attribute? 1 to 5: 1 “long way to go” 5 “already there”	Evidence
Seek to Address the Injustice of Race and Gender Disparities: Effective black males work seeks to close the gaps between the success of young black males and their male and female peers. This work does not seek to hinder or impede the progress of any group, but rather implements strategies tailored to the unique situation of black males in the United States.	Rating:	Yes ☐ No ☐ In what ways is this evident in your program’s work?
Notes/Discussion:		
Employ Targeted Strategies: The best of black males work recognizes that universal programs often do not effectively aid black males. Black males work is targeted to have a positive impact on black males specifically.	Rating:	Yes ☐ No ☐ In what ways is this evident in your program’s work?
Notes/Discussion:		
Use a Race- and Gender-Specific Metric to Evaluate Success: Just as targeted strategies are necessary to address black males, evaluative tools must be explicit in determining the relative success rate of black males within a particular program.	Rating:	Yes ☐ No ☐ In what ways is this evident in your program’s work?
Notes/Discussion:		

SECTION 2 – Black MENToring Social Marketing Campaign: A Guide For The Field

As has been demonstrated, schooling experiences and academic gaps are important barriers and sites of inequity for Black boys. Because Black boys face unique challenges in their educational and schooling pursuits, they must develop unique assets and protective factors (i.e., racial pride, resilience, persistence) to facilitate academic motivations and achievement needed to overcome these challenges. Black men can be important supports in helping them develop these assets. However, as currently and traditionally analyzed¹⁶, Black men constitute one of the smallest segments of mentors in the nation while Black boys constitute one of the largest mentee segments. This guide is designed to provide insights into addressing this apparent mismatch.

This section of the guidebook is designed to assist your organization in developing and implementing a recruitment and retention strategy that speaks to Black men who would serve as mentors to Black boys. In it we:

- Outline the core elements of social marketing campaign and framework
- Propose core strategies underlying an effective recruitment and retention campaign for Black men, including:
 - 1) Developing a Mentor Candidate Profile Utilizing the Values Function Inventory
 - 2) Developing and Matching Key Messages to Mentor Value Functions
 - 3) Employing Positive Deviance Concepts to Empower EXISTING DOERS
 - 4) Utilization of Multi-channel Message Distributions
- Offer the successful *You Know Different* Campaign as a model framework to guide outreach campaign planning
- Compile insights from practitioners and stakeholders to offer a checklist of considerations as a basis for designing a campaign to recruit and retain Black men as mentors for Black Boys.



A Social Marketing Approach¹⁷

Social marketing is the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify or abandon a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups or society. It is a process that applies marketing principles and techniques to create, communicate, and deliver value in order to influence target audience to act in a way that benefits society as well as the target audience. Most social marketing efforts are applied to improving public health, preventing injuries, protecting the environment and/or positively contributing to communities.

Myriad approaches to social and behavioral change have been employed before the advent of social marketing:

- **Education Approach** – assumed that individuals will do the “right thing” if only they understood why they need to do what is being advocated and knew how to carry it out.
- **Persuasion Approach** – attempted to discover the careful arguments and motivational hot buttons that will cause someone to act. Assumed an already known right way and promoted it as a standard (in contrast, social marketing believes that change only happens when you start with the customers’ reality).
- **Behavioral Modification Approach** – assumed people act because they know or learn techniques necessary for action and find the outcomes rewarding (or punishing). Training the modeled behavior and offering rewards for doing it works best for individuals but scaling up to large group or societal level can be costly.
- **Social Influence Approach** – most impactful when norms and issues are well understood and accepted; pressure to conform is extremely strong; behavior to be influence is socially important and visible. The more educated and emancipated an individual is, the less likely this approach will have a major role to play in behavior change or adaptation

Social marketing realizes the limits implicit in any of these approaches alone and extends them by incorporating a variety of means to address perceived limits to efficacy, costs and opportunity. These means include “offering alternatives, promoting benefits, providing incentives and lowering costs.”¹⁸ Core ideas and concepts utilized in social marketing campaigns include:

Core Elements of Social Marketing Campaigns (Deshpande and Basil)

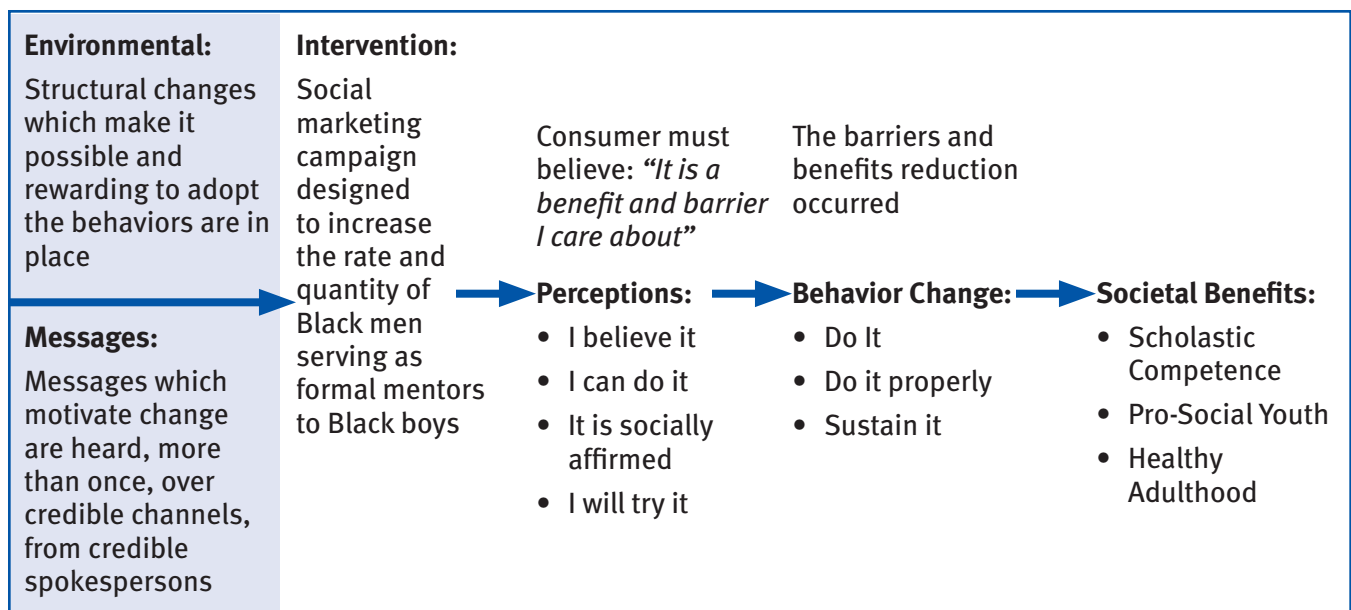
- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer orientation and focus• Segmentation and targeting of market/ audience• Mutual exchange of value• Competition analysis and offer positioning | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marketing mix or strategy: offer benefits, reduced costs, ensure convenience, compelling actionable message• Diverse media channel usage: mass media and community based approaches• Alliance and partnerships |
|---|--|

Social Marketing and the Black MENToring Campaign

Recruiting anyone to change/adopt a behavior is challenging. Effectively recruiting Black men to mentor Black boys will take a comprehensive and strategic approach. Essentially, the core outcome of a social marketing campaign framework is a positive change (societal benefit – increase the rate and quantity of Black men serving as formal mentors to Black boys) in actions on the part of the targeted consumer of the key message delivered.

In order to influence the behavioral change, perceptions must be influenced in 2 core aspects: 1) the issue (benefits and barriers) must resonate with the consumer, and 2) the consumer must gain a positive belief in his ability to perform the requested action (efficacy). In order to influence these areas of perceptions, social marketing campaigns consider the environmental context that may motivate the consumer as well as the message content that speaks to the concerns and values of the consumer. Once defined, a platform for consistent delivery of these messages is designed. This platform considers who should deliver the message as well as when, where and how.

With these considerations in mind, a generic logic framework for conceptualizing our social marketing campaign is below¹⁹:



In order to effectively recruit and retain Black Men as mentors to Black boys, you have to know who you want to recruit, what to say, who is best to do say it, where they are and when you can reach them. These considerations frame the remainder of this guide:

- To Whom To SAY IT – Target Segmentation and Population Identification
- What To SAY – Key Message Strategy
- Who SHOULD SAY IT – Positive Deviance, Opinion Leaders and Message Ambassadors
- Where To SAY IT – Multi-Channel Targeted Outreach Strategies

TO WHOM TO SAY IT*

SOCIAL MARKETING PRINCIPLE:

Target Segmentation and Population Identification

The bottom line of any social marketing effort is to effect the actions of the consumers of the message, so effective campaigns understand the need to develop the right message for the right audience in the right context. As Andreasen points out, “There is no behavioral influence until the person to be influenced takes an action....Everything a social marketer does starts with the customer’s perspectives and this makes all the difference between programs that ought to work and programs that really do.”(p.9)

One function of market segmentation is to identify and cluster major segments of a population along clearly identifiable characteristics or other descriptive traits that allow one to better ‘know the audience’ and thereby develop and deliver messages designed to their needs, interests, desires and concerns. This is a 3 step process as follows: segment the market, evaluate segments, and choose one or more as a focal point.

This case study of the It’s In Our Hands campaign illustrates how the Census used market segmentation to find target the right people.

Case Study Part 1 – (Census 2010): It’s In Our Hands

Counting everyone in the United States is a huge undertaking and to do it effectively requires a comprehensive strategy to get the message out and persuade people to respond. Barriers range from lack of understanding of the census to serious concerns about whether the government can be trusted with personal information. To address this challenge, Census 2010 launched ***It’s In Our Hands***, a large scale campaign to increase census participation among historically undercounted populations, including young African American males.²⁰

It was based on the understanding that greater effort must be expended to reach hard-to-count groups and less effort will be needed for those who are more inclined to cooperate. To target efforts toward hard-to-count groups, Census 2010 segmented the audience into eight clusters based on mail-back behavior in Census 2000:

- o Five of the clusters were deemed hard-to-count and received the most emphasis. These included: Single Unattached Mobiles, Ethnic Enclaves I and II, and Economically Disadvantaged I and II.
- o The other three clusters have historically higher mail response and received less emphasis. They were identified as: Advantaged Homeowners and All Around Average I and II.

This segmentation enabled the campaign to craft messages and develop outreach strategies to each audience cluster relative to each cluster’s propensity to respond in the past. Census 2010 used a baseline mass media campaign supplemented by specific outreach efforts and strategies to further educate hard-to-count communities.

Relevance to Recruitment Strategy:

Reaching the right group is key to effective recruitment

It is essential to realize that those who would volunteer and mentor come from all walks of life and possess an array of outlooks on the world and on the reasoning/root causes of the issues faced by Black boys and young men. They also differ in their beliefs, assessments and approaches about what is in the interest of young Black men and boys in order to attain successful outcomes in society. This is as true for the mentors as it is for mentees, their families and caregivers. Programs and agencies desiring to recruit and retain minorities as volunteers are hampered by insufficient knowledge about why they would choose to volunteer and, as most studies are done on majority white (mainstream) populations, “generalizations from one culture to another are inappropriate and dysfunctional.”²¹

As important as it is to understand an individual’s general motivations toward volunteering and mentoring, it is equally, if not more important to understand and reach the ‘type’ of Black male adult mentor who would be effective to guide young black men and boys ‘to’ and ‘through’ healthy adulthood! Latting’s study of volunteers in a Big Brothers/Big Sisters program indicates that “norms of altruism and social responsibility were consistently more salient for the Black volunteers than they were for their White counterparts” (p. 130). As the Census 2010 segmentation showed, “somewhat unique to the Black audience is the benefit hierarchy in completing the Census: community is first, family is second, self is third.”

PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS:

Identifying the varied motivations of your target group allows for a tailored message

Mentor Candidate Profiling: Community Concern (“Altruism”)

Research in the mentoring field has determined that a significant factor in recruiting and retaining volunteers is an understanding of their underlying motivations for seeking a satisfying volunteer experience. The Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI) is a tool that can help understand the motivations of volunteers drawn to mentoring. Since its development, research has shown it to be accurate in predicting the types of volunteer work people will gravitate to depending on their personal motivations, as well as how rewarding they will find the experience to have been upon reflection. The main categories of motivations identified are²²:

- Values: expressing humanitarian and pro-social values through action
- Career: exploring career options and increasing career opportunities
- Understanding: learning about the world, the diverse people in it, and, ultimately, oneself
- Enhancement: boosting self-esteem, feeling important and needed by others
- Protective: distracting oneself from, or working through, personal problems through service
- Social: satisfying the expectations of friends or family, making new friends

Omoto and Snyder have proposed **community concern** as an additional value to consider in reasoning behind why people volunteer and mentor. For our purposes, community concern focuses on volunteering based on a sense of obligation to the community or one’s group of membership and affinity to which you feel attached. **Community concern** and **social responsibility**, as well as more “altruistic” motivations (i.e. values, understanding) are among the prime motivators for the Black men who would engage Black boys in mentoring relationships and a set of key messages and outreach strategies with this motivation in mind would best reach this target group.

WHAT TO SAY

SOCIAL MARKETING PRINCIPLE: Key Messaging Strategy

Once an audience or population is adequately segmented, strategic key messages can be delivered to them through appropriate channels. The success of a social marketing campaign does not depend mainly on its budget but rather on the message(s) sent. Following Smith's framework for successful social marketing campaigns for injury preventions, several factors must be present in a successful messaging strategy²³:

- *Simple steps.* Messages focusing on simple, minor, or easy process steps are more successful than those focusing on complex tactics.
- *Encouraging the confidence to make change.* Messages need to increase perceptions of relevance, i.e., *"It is a benefit and barrier I care about and it matters to me"*, but consumers need to also believe they have the capability of performing a requested action, i.e., *I believe it, I can do it, It is socially affirmed, I will try it.*
- *Benefits emphasized over risks.* The benefits or rewards need to be clearly outlined in campaign messages and need to take precedence over risk or fear arousing messages.
- *Addressing and reducing constraints/barriers to action.* Messages need to address constraints and need to be sensitive to the distinction between perceived and actual constraints.

The discussion below about the *Census' It's In Our Hands* campaign illustrates these key messaging strategies.

Case Study Part – (Census 2010): It's In Our Hands

It's In Our Hands unveiled 3 core insights about the Black Audience and utilized these discoveries to inform its messaging and outreach strategies:

Community Focused: Community, both geographic and ethnic, creates a sense of belonging and pride that is unique to the Black audience. They all have a latent desire to see positive change in the community and their families, before seeing individual benefits. **Resulting Strategy** - This insight will be leveraged as some in these clusters do not feel that the Census would or could have an impact on them personally. However, the Black audience can be motivated by creating conversations around the community benefits that can be attained from Census participation.

Highly Spiritual: Spirituality is an integral part of the Black daily experience, and is largely driven by regular church attendance. Religious practice is a strong expression for this audience within all clusters. The Black church is the ultimate trusted source of information, as well as the social and political hub of the community. **Resulting Strategy** - The Black church is an important part of the daily lives of the Black audience. From the Civil Rights Movement until now, the Black church has been a conduit for conversations around social, political and financial issues. Also on the rise is the number of mega churches in the Black community. These churches have the ability to draw large numbers of people that are interested in engaging in conversations and receiving information from what they consider to be a trusted source.

Highly Influenced by Word of Mouth: As important as traditional advertising, word of mouth is critical when trying to influence the Black audience. The Black audience relies heavily on recommendations and endorsements from credible sources within their immediate community or from those with whom they can relate. **Resulting Strategy** - The influencer is an important element in motivating the Black audience to take action. Influencers such as celebrities, entertainers, radio personalities, prominent community business leaders, clergy, community activists, and local congressmen are catalysts to "conversations" as their messages have credibility and tend to take on a viral nature.

Relevance to Recruitment Strategy:

Address cultural and personal barriers to getting involved

While the benefits of becoming involved with a formal mentoring program seem self-evident, the barriers and associated remedies are often not as apparent. Thus, it is important to research and “tease out”, and respond to Black men’s concerns about becoming a mentor. For example, Cheryl Oakman, Director of Training and Technical Assistance at United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey offers this insight: “Because adult Black men over the age of 40 have been socialized to keep family business at home, respond to ‘others’ with caution, and to ‘fight the power’ to resist oppression, we have experienced Black men being resistant to the background checks and clearance process. We have also found that Black men prefer to function in natural settings or where they hang out, rather than going into formal organizational settings to provide mentoring or to participate in training.” When designing outreach campaigns for Black men, these often latent concerns must be implicitly and explicitly addressed in messages and interactions.²⁴



The following is a list of barriers that potential mentors indicate as deterrents to volunteering. With each barrier, there are suggested strategies to overcome obstacles. Suggestions by Miller (Man Up) and Rogers to address these concerns include:

Potential Barriers	Suggested Response Messages
• Interested in being mentored themselves	△ Program stresses mutual benefits of mentoring relationship △ Highlight support services and training options available to mentors
• Need to spend money on mentors	△ Program provides reimbursable expenses or activity funds for mentor to participate △ Program pays for extra-curricular activities △ Reinforce that the best thing they can give is their time and experience
• Inability to find mentoring program in local communities	△ Note the flexibility of your mentor-mentee meeting times and locations △ Provide transportation stipends
• Time constraints and Competing Commitments	△ Provide clarity about the time commitment and the role of a mentor as a friend or guide. △ Stress that commitment is only X hours a month △ Emphasize that participants can involve their mentee into their regular daily activities △ Talk about mentoring as a fun opportunity
• Inadequate training and ongoing support	△ Assure that training will let them know “what’s hot” and “what’s not” △ Assure them that they will have program support to address any challenges boys present
• Belief that only white collar professional African American men can be mentors	△ Reinforce the cultural competence of community-based mentors who have been where many of these young men are now.
• Perceived Lack motivation and knowledge about the benefits of mentoring African American males Not comfortable dealing with adolescent African American male youth	△ Mentor training is provided so they’ll be prepared to better understand the youth and their perspectives. △ Staff also provide ongoing guidance to address any questions or concerns that come up. △ Share data and examples that highlight your program’s successes. Relate these results to the training and ongoing guidance provided. △ Remind them the primary relationship is with parents △ Clarify that men are not substitute fathers

Studies show that Black volunteers generally have more communal and “altruistic” motivations. The challenge is to segment the audience, identify relevant motivations and develop messages matched to the appropriate motivational function.

Studies of Blacks’ helping behaviors, political participation and social participation all show increased activity when the beneficiaries of their efforts are other Blacks, particularly when minority group identification is salient. Implications for recruitment and retention suggest targeting this segment in outreach efforts by highlighting the needs of youth to be mentored as a moral/social/political obligation.²⁵ The Values Function Inventory can be strategically utilized to inform mentoring outreach campaigns by matching motivations with persuasive communication messages, predicting volunteers’ satisfaction and commitment.²⁶

The following table (***Key Message Development and Matching to Values Function***) outlines how retention and recruitment messages can be tailored based on the suspected motivation of a mentor candidate as determined through the effective usage of the Values Function Inventory. Based on the table and sample messages, your organization/program can conduct its own assessment (***You Talkin’ To Me?: Black MENToring Message Resonance Report Card***) of its recruiting and outreach messages to Black men, with a specific focus on their appeal to values of community concern and social responsibility.



PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS: Match messages to motivation

Table: Matching Value Function Inventory, Key Messages and Retention Activities

MOTIVATION	Values Function Inventory Item (Clary et al, p. 1520)	Recruitment Message (Fact Sheet #8)	Retention Activities (p. 3, Fact Sheet #27)
Values	- I am concerned about those less fortunate than myself - I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving - I feel compassion toward people in need - I feel it is important to help others - I can do something for a cause that is important to me	<i>Young people need your support</i> <i>Everyone needs a helping hand every now and then</i> <i>Mentor a child: It's the right thing to do</i> <i>Make the world a better place one child at a time</i>	- Share information about the progress of their mentees and program outcomes - Emphasize their dedication and caring actions during recognition events - Encourage them to participate in community service activities with their mentee
Enhancement	- Volunteering makes me feel important - Volunteering increases my self-esteem - Volunteering makes me feel needed - Volunteering makes me feel better about myself - Volunteering is a way to make new friends	<i>I get as much out of mentoring as he does</i> <i>Make a friend while making a difference</i> <i>I never thought giving back would give me so much in return</i> <i>Mentoring: The best part of two people's day</i>	- Make sure that mentees, staff, and organizational leaders voice their thanks to mentors - Provide group outings and other opportunities for socializing with other mentors and staff - Frequently praise mentors for their positive qualities
Social	- My friends volunteer - People I'm close to want me to volunteer - People I know share an interest in community service - Others with whom I am close place a high value on community service - Volunteering is an important activity to the people I know best	<i>Mentoring: All the cool people are doing it</i> <i>Show your boss you're a people person: mentor a child</i> <i>Women dig men who mentor</i> <i>Be a mentor because everyone loves a hero</i>	- Find ways to share your appreciation of volunteers with their employers and co-workers - Invite friends or family members to participate in mentor-mentee picnics - Send thank-you cards to volunteers' homes so they can share them with family members
Understanding	- I can learn more about the cause for which I am working - Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things - Volunteering lets me learn things through direct, hands on experience - I can learn how to deal with a variety of people - I can explore my own strengths	<i>Life happens when you connect with others</i> <i>Think there's a generation gap? Close it by mentoring a child</i> <i>Mentoring a child can open your eyes while opening up their future</i>	- Provide ongoing training opportunities that help mentors learn more about mentoring, youth service, and other relevant topics - Inform mentors about other opportunities to learn, such as community events, books, or online articles - Encourage mentors and mentees to reflect together about their relationship, such as through journaling
Protective	- No matter how bad I've been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it. - By volunteering I feel less lonely. - Doing volunteer work relieves me of some of the guilt over being more fortunate than others. - Volunteering helps me work through my own personal problems. - Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles.	<i>Did you need someone to care about you when you were that age</i> <i>Don't let a young person make the same mistakes you once did. Share what you know</i>	- Offer extra praise and one-on-one support time to reinforce their personal growth as mentors - Encourage them to draw on their own experiences as they develop relationships with mentees - Help mentors reflect on the ways that volunteering makes them feel good about themselves
Career	- Volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work - I can make new contacts that might help my career - Volunteering allows me to explore career options - Volunteering will help me to succeed in my chosen profession - Volunteering experience will look good on my resume	<i>Mentoring a child opens a world of possibilities for both of you</i> <i>Mentoring: Creating skilled communicators for over 100 years</i>	- Invite speakers to training events who can expand awareness of careers working with youth - Provide written documentation of completed training and hours of volunteer service - Include opportunities for professional networking at mentor training or other group meetings

You Talkin' To Me?: Black MENToring Message Resonance Report Card

- o Does your message content resonate with your target audience?
- o Convene a group of stakeholders and candidate Black men as mentors.
- o Display recruitment and outreach materials and rate based on the following:

Connections Essential to Effective Black Male Messaging	Evidence	How close are you to having this attribute? 1 to 5: 1: "long way to go" 5: "already there"
Affinity with targeted mentee and his circumstances	Yes ☐ No ☐ In what ways is this evident in your message	Rating: Range:
Appeal to social responsibility or sense of obligation	Yes ☐ No ☐ In what ways is this evident in your message?	Rating: Range:
Implicit/Explicit acknowledgement and resolution of potential barriers to volunteering	Yes ☐ No ☐ In what ways is this evident in your message?	Rating: Range:
Indication of how costs are minimized and contribution will be valued	Yes ☐ No ☐ In what ways is this evident in your message?	Rating: Range:
Clear and compelling CALL to ACTION	Yes ☐ No ☐ In what ways is this evident in your message?	Rating: Range:

WHO SHOULD SAY IT

SOCIAL MARKETING PRINCIPLE: Use Opinion Leaders and Existing Doers

An effective social marketing campaign employs a mix of voices to spread campaign messages. Messages should be spread through myriad “voices” (i.e., authority figures, opinion leaders, peers and mentees) as spokespeople. The combination increases the likelihood of attention, credibility, and support for campaign goals. People who look similar to audience members could be used in messages and speak of intrinsic rewards attained through mentoring. Opinion leaders can increase the likelihood of a community accepting a campaign.

Additionally, programs must begin to realize the difference between buy-in and ownership²⁷:

- Buy-in is when someone else, or some group of people, has done the development, the thinking and the deciding, and now they have to convince you to come along and buy-in to their idea – so that you can help implement their idea without your involvement in the initial conversations or resulting decisions.
- Ownership is when you own or share the creation and refinement of an idea, a decision, an action plan, a choice; it means that you have participated in its development, that it is your choice freely made.

EXISTING DOERS are more likely to own the recruitment campaign. The discussion below highlights the importance of finding and engaging the people who are already doing it with success and empower them to help throughout your campaign, from planning to implementation.

Positive Deviance as a Means to Empower EXISTING DOERS

The *Positive Deviance* (PD) approach to organizational, social, and behavioral change is premised on the belief that **in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing worse challenges.** Identifying and learning from individuals with better outcomes than their peers and enabling communities to adopt behaviors that explain the improved outcome are powerful methods behind the concept of Positive Deviance.

Positive Deviance is based on the premise that some solutions to community problems already exist within the community and just need to be discovered. Because behaviors change slowly, most public health practitioners agree that the solutions discovered within a community are more sustainable than those brought into the community from the outside.

PD is a strength and asset based approach that preserves equity by privileging wisdom of doers of healthy behaviors, identifies and cultivates accessible solutions, introduces a generic approach for local problem solving and localizes efforts, thus enhancing the likelihood of their sustainability. The approach is also empowering, as it reveals and actualizes “good enough solutions” instead of lingering while a solution is sought.

Mentors and potential candidates, stakeholders and mentees should be invited to help plan, develop, and implement the campaign. Including them will gain commitment from communities and will increase audience attention and intent to change behavior. Opinion leaders integrated into campaign development will also help with understanding peer/social norms, which could feasibly be barriers to individual behavior change.

Relevance to Recruitment Strategy: Existing Doers are the best messengers

UWGPSNJ has been concerned with the issues of recruiting African-American men as mentors and one of their biggest challenges is recruiting African-American men as mentors to work with Black males in their programs. Mentoring recruitment of men is difficult and the most carefully planned recruitment efforts often end in disappointment. Therefore, it makes sense to view every existing mentor as a resource in the recruitment effort. However, it is not good enough just to get their buy-in to your campaign efforts, but to make the campaign effort theirs. An effective recruitment and retention campaign for Black men to serve as mentors to Black boys should start with EXISTING DOERS as exemplars of the campaign message.

As we will highlight below, UWGPSNJ has pioneered the Philly Roots Fellowship Program as a means of creating mutual learning exchanges between formal and organic mentoring practitioners to cultivate the knowledge of EXISTING DOERS (mentors) to inform the mentoring field.

The Philly Roots Initiative (“Philly Roots”) was developed by the United Way of Greater Philadelphia & Southern New Jersey (UWGPSNJ) and its partners in an attempt to systemically, yet creatively ensure that young Black men graduate from high school and are college and career ready with the aid of caring adult mentors equipped to assist them in being successful in school and life. Philly Roots is an effort to recognize, connect and invest in black males from all walks of life who engage others in making communities stronger.

The effort, according to Steve Vassor who developed the concept, “aims to scale up the quality of grassroots mentoring by making sure mentors who work with young people are best equipped to help them achieve their goals. Philly Roots brings together those already working on issues around mentoring in the Philadelphia community.” Lisa Nutter, a member of the Philly Roots Steering Committee notes: “For far too long the informal relationship building and mentorship that happens every day in our communities – particularly communities of color – has gone unrecognized and under-supported....What Philly Roots seeks to do is to understand how these men do their work, better support that work by providing information and other supports.”

PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS:

Existing Doers may endorse group mentoring or a blended model over other models

Based on UWGPSNJ’s work with Black males in the field, Cheryl Oakman notes:

I would like to stress group mentoring as a strategy that we have found to be effective, and share that many men are not attracted to formal/traditional one-on-one mentoring models because they are already active in their communities serving as informal/grassroots mentors. They have a legacy of connecting that does not necessarily follow traditional definitions of mentoring, but instead their contributions can be more broadly defined to include helping by guiding, coaching, influencing and advising, in both one-on-one and highly socialized group level contexts. They value creativity and innovation, and tend to resist constraints on their freedom to do what they want, and they don’t care much for formality and long processes.

As affirmation to this sentiment, a select group of practitioners in the Black male development field convened in Detroit (A Gathering of Leaders - 2013) to discuss innovations and challenges in the field of Black Male Achievement. An important message and outcome from the dialogue was reported in a blog as such: *They also encouraged foundations to come into their communities with “open hearts and understanding” about the myriad ways that community members are already working to help young men of color that don’t neatly fit into these frameworks, but which will exponentially leverage philanthropic investments if funders would only see and appreciate them.*²⁸

Discovery and Action Dialogue Worksheet

(Adapted from Buscell, Prucia, 2013, p. 18)

To facilitate dialogue and feedback from your existing mentors, use this dialogue worksheet as a template/ prompt for discussion at a convening of EXISTING DOERS group session. Though focused on mentors, you could also convene programs and organizations that are doing exemplary work with Black men. If no session is convened, these questions can also be asked individually or through some form of a survey:

Purpose	Questions
Affirm knowledge of problem or challenge. Provide chance to get thoughts and questions on the table	• What do you know or think about Black men mentoring Black boys • What strategies worked to get you to mentor?
Focus on personal practices. Recognize participants' existing knowledge	• What do you do that is working in your program to get Black men to mentor Black boys? • What motivated you to become a mentor to Black boys?
Identify constraints or barriers	• Why prevents you from getting black men to mentor? • What barriers/obstacles or considerations almost prevented you from becoming a mentor?
Establish that practicing the desired behavior is possible. Identify existing uncommon traits. Identify enablers and supports that make desired behaviors easier or more likely.	• What do you do differently than other programs that allows you to effectively recruit and retain Black men? • What do you do differently than other Black men that allows you to be an effective mentor? • Are there supports you receive that makes mentoring more feasible, important or essential for you?
Provide an opportunity for participants to generate and share new ideas for enabling the desired behaviors	• What are your suggestions for improvement and enhancement of your efforts?
Identify action steps and target dates and a mechanism for reporting back. Recruit volunteers for each action step. Capture ideas that don't have an identified plan or volunteer	• Next Steps: • Person Responsible: • Deadlines:

WHERE TO SAY IT

SOCIAL MARKETING PRINCIPLE: Multi-Channel Targeted Outreach Strategies

Because budgets are usually low and mass media efforts rarely target messages at the level necessary for successful social marketing efforts, an array of message creators, diffusers and outlet channels must be used to disseminate the message. If the campaign is going to be successful, it must provide opinion leaders, ambassadors and peer networks with the tools and information to motivate the consumer to act on the message delivered. Providing your mentors with a welcoming and well-organized environment, clear information about the mentoring experience, quality training and ongoing support, and meaningful forms of recognition for work well done, your program will be more likely to keep volunteers coming back. These volunteers will also be more likely to recommend your organization to others interested in mentoring, providing you with a larger pool of potential new mentors.

Various types of materials can be created (posters, handouts, websites, PSA's, buttons, etc.), but they must have a compelling call to action and delivered where Black men congregate and are in a mindset to receive the message. Diffusion strategies can include:

- Direct outreach via the program (personal contact, education sessions, recruitment events, etc.)
- Grassroots outreach through social networks, religious institutions, social groups, clubs and associations (which usually relies on peers and EXISTING DOERS as spokespersons)
- Virtual and viral tools

Relevance to Recruitment Strategy: The “Where” is not rocket science!

Strategies should to be tailored to the characteristics of the people whom you want to recruit. Think about where and how to reach them. What do they read? Where do they shop, work, and recreate? What community organizations do they join? And who in the community might be able to influence their decision? While these are not new strategies, as new generations of black men move to adulthood, these questions are worth reviewing again and again.

PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS: Message Dissemination and Outlet Strategy²⁹

The key to reaching Black men is a thorough assessment and reflection upon the three previous considerations (To Whom To Say It, What To Say, Who To Say It). Once considered, as with most outreach strategies, there exists a basic set of outreach platforms and channels, and these can work just as well for Black men as for any other groups:

- **Word-of-mouth.** The oral tradition works well in the African American tradition. Tell the story of the needs of African American males and enlist male mentors with your passionate plea in face-to-face engagement. People are most likely to volunteer when asked by someone they know. Use personal contacts—family, friends, and colleagues—to recruit mentors. Encourage existing mentors to recruit their family and friends. People are more likely to volunteer if a friend or family member vouches for a program. And, because people often associate with people similar to themselves, strategic use of word-of-mouth by volunteers, staff, or partners can help reach a specific demographic you are trying to recruit.
- **Marketing materials.** Posters, brochures, and flyers can be used in conjunction with many of the strategies discussed here. They can also be displayed or distributed in local businesses, community centers, libraries, and other places frequented by the types of people you want to recruit.
- **Local leaders.** Leaders of local government agencies, businesses, faith organizations, professional associations, business associations, fraternal organizations, and other groups can provide access to their organizations and their membership. Or they may want to be mentors themselves. Meet with these leaders to educate them about your program, as well as your need for mentors. If appropriate, bring along current mentors, mentees, or members of your partnership who can speak about the benefits of mentoring, not just for the mentees but also for the mentors and the community.
- **Community organizations.** Making presentations before community organizations can be an effective way of recruiting. Again, if at all possible, bring along mentors and mentees to offer testimonials about the effects and importance of mentoring. If a mentoring program is new, use information from similar programs to illustrate the benefits of mentoring.
- **The media.** The local print and electronic media can be used to generate support for your program and recruit mentors. Write press releases, op-ed pieces, and letters to the local newspaper that extol the benefits of mentoring, highlight successes, and promote your program. Try to convince a media outlet to become a sponsor for your program and help you recruit members from its readers, listeners, or viewers. Seek out a journalist who covers social service issues or has a passion for youth, to champion your program. Journalists are especially interested in first-person stories, so be certain to involve a mentor and mentee when talking to reporters. Target the media outlets that reach the demographic you are trying to recruit as mentors.
- **The mail.** Create a mail campaign to reach the specific people you want to recruit. This can be done through Email or postal mail. Regular mail can be expensive. Piggy-backing a mailing on one done by a business or group who reach the people you want to recruit can both reduce your cost and provide credibility for your appeal. Companies that mail packets of coupons to specific communities may be willing to include your materials in their mailings.
- **The Internet.** People expect every organization to have a presence on the Web. If your SS/HS program does not have a Web site, you may be able to find a volunteer from one of your partnering organizations (or even a student) who can build one. Ask partner and community organizations representing the types of people you want to recruit as mentors to link your “call for mentors” portion of your Web site to their Web sites. If your organization cannot afford a basic Web site, you can use community blogs. Remember that sexual predators use the Internet and that an electronic contact should only be the first stage in recruiting mentors. Never post photographs, names, or any identifying information about mentees or mentors on the Web.
- **Community events.** Sponsor a recruitment drive kick-off event. Ask community leaders, mentors, and mentees to talk about mentoring.
- **Newsletters.** Putting announcements or short articles about your program in the newsletters of community organizations, municipal or county agencies, faith organizations, or other groups can also be an inexpensive method to recruit mentors.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Below is a case study of the *You Know Different* Campaign, which can serve as a model for how to integrate all of the previously discussed elements of a targeted social media outreach effort.

on peer spokespersons to achieve the level of connection and authenticity that is needed to persuade youth

Case Study 2: The *You Know Different* Campaign

Description	You Know Different was designed to draw young people to HIV testing and know their HIV status by reducing real and perceived barriers to testing while highlighting local organizations dedicated to serving the youth population. A variety of messengers were used to ensure that the messages reach their intended audience, and that they come from trusted sources.
To Whom To Say It?	African American youth (ages 13–24) and sexual minority youth of color.
What To Say?	The <i>You Know Different</i> campaign created a message that communicated authenticity, respect and values young people’s sense of self-preservation, need for sense of belonging/identification with others like me, and the competing values of independence and uniqueness. The catch phrase “You Know Different” is actually a reminder that knowing your HIV status and being apart of the solution is a powerful benefit of accessing an HIV test. This campaign addresses some of the cost of getting a HIV test within its primary message, “They say you are scared, they say you don’t care, they say won’t stop AIDS.” The message is designed to inform, educate, and give campaign information. Through the voice of the primary message, young people are moved to do their part in ending the increasing epidemic that impacts their community.
Who Should Say It?	A variety of messengers are used to ensure that the messages reach their intended audience, and that they come from trusted sources. Social networks or groups, clubs, street venues, parks, or meeting and other gathering places will be important channels for communication to the target population, again relying on peer spokespersons to achieve the level of connection and authenticity that is needed to persuade youth and young adults to test for HIV infection.
Where To Say It?	The <i>You Know Different</i> campaign has made HIV testing more convenient by encouraging organizations to go to where young people are to provide testing services. For example, some of the most effective campaigns occurred on college campuses. Another goal was making testing facilities more appealing to youth. The <i>You Know Different</i> campaign utilizes printed materials, promotional items, and personal selling to engage a targeted group of young people in venues in which they are comfortable. The <i>You Know Different</i> campaign has used radio, websites (campaign website, local organizational websites, Facebook), and distribution sites (schools, agencies, street, clubs, stores, etc.) to get information to the primary audience.
RESULTS	A focused, thoughtfully designed social marketing program that mobilizes the creativity and resources of youth agencies and community organizations can motivate youth at risk to consider, seek, and undergo HIV counseling and testing. As measured by: • calls by youth to service agencies • calls by youth to schedule appointments • walk-in visits by youth to counseling and testing services • number of tests performed all increased during two weeks of campaign pilot Across 6 different and varying geographic regions: Nearly two thirds of youth surveyed reported seeing campaign materials and 86% of those affirmed that campaign messages contributed to their decision to seek services. Utilization parameters reverted back to baseline quickly after campaign ended.

Program Tool 1: Black MENToring Program Outreach, Recruitment and Retention Consideration Checklist

PHASE	Guiding Questions ³⁰	Practice Suggestions ³¹ :
Outreach and Recruitment	• What are you telling potential volunteers about the experience they will have? • Are your recruitment messages realistic and relevant to Black men and how they see issues facing Black boys? • What motivations do your recruitment messages speak to (address) and do they align with your program goals and structure? • Does your screening and interview process allow mentors to inform you about their motivations, strengths, limitations and personal goals for the mentoring experience? • Do you provide information up front about time commitment, expected meetings and trainings, travel, etc.?	• Create a mentoring program reflective of the traditions, values, and beliefs of the culture of the mentees and mentors. Acknowledge the racial and socioeconomic pressures that have created a shortage of minority mentors. Encourage and challenge people to support their communities. For instance, African American men have historically been marginalized, yet system involved boys need the help of committed, responsible African American adults from their community to help them. • Use targeted messages that emphasize community concern and social responsibility. Employ statistics, visuals, and media clips to communicate to potential mentors that they are needed as mentors to help young African American men at risk grow into manhood. Highlight the success of the mentoring program. Emphasize the training and ongoing support that are available to all mentors. Convey to potential mentors that they can make a real difference. • Follow up with and engage potential mentors right away. Don't delay in signing up interested individuals to attend a monthly or quarterly orientation session. Once individuals have made a decision to mentor and have passed a background and reference check, provide them with mentor training. Individuals who aren't able to serve as mentors (or who don't want to) can often assume other meaningful volunteer roles in mentoring programs. • Make sure there are African American men on your program's staff and board of directors. Potential mentors need to see themselves reflected in the program's staff and leadership. Have staff and leadership recruit peers. • Use images that feature African American males. Include a variety of images of African American men and youth in your Web-based and print materials. • Partner with community groups to make presentations to groups of men. Identify a well-connected individual in the community who can help create a list of key individuals and groups to contact for potential mentors (e.g., men involved in faith-based initiatives, professional associations, sports clubs, fraternities, or local business owners). Recruit key community leaders (e.g., local politicians, sports or radio personalities) to champion the cause of mentoring and to become mentors. • Use Instrumental mentoring focus: Use language that appeals to men. Include words like "challenging," "satisfying," "results-oriented," and "hard work." Let them know they can "make a difference" in a person's life. Avoid terms like "nurturing" in favor of terms like "empowering." • Use the media outlets that appeal to the particular group you are trying to attract. These may include ethnic or community newspapers and smaller radio stations.

PHASE	Guiding Questions ³²	Practice Suggestions ³³ :
Engagement and Retention	- Do training and supports offered employ a race + gender lens as well as a strengths and assets based approach? - Do you consider volunteer motivations when crafting recognition activities and approaches? - Do mentors have an opportunity to share their hopes and expectations for the volunteer experience and to learn about how mentoring relationships develop and change over time? - Do mentors gain an understanding of your program's short- and long-term goals, how your organization is structured, and how mentoring Black boys fits within your entire organization? - Is your program and organization generally welcoming and culturally competent regarding interactions with Black men and boys? - Does your program conduct regular, personal check-ins with mentors that provide an opportunity to talk about how the match is going, ask questions, and voice concerns or frustrations, and obtain advice and support? - Do mentors have regular opportunities to evaluate trainings and other mentor events and to offer suggestions for new topics or activities? - Do mentors have opportunities to take leadership roles, such as developing a group activity, sharing a skill, designing a new poster or flyer, participating on a committee?	- Expand mentor training and supports to directly address and provide insight into Black male development and the sociocultural issue Black boys and Black men face. - Retain African American male mentors who currently work with your program. Use them to outreach to their males friends and others in their circle. As a mentor, they can talk from experience and share the importance and fun mentoring young brothers. - Prepare and use male mentees to persuade and encourage men to become mentors. Give them a script that they can use. Involve parents (especially single moms raising boys). Use a mentor-mentee-parent triad to make presentations to selected outreach locations. Document the powerful stories of the mentored boys. - Acknowledge the contributions of current mentors. Provide incentives for mentors (e.g., tickets to sport-ing and entertainment events, reimbursement for transportation costs, gift cards). Mentor Event Days (MED) - During National Mentoring Month (every January), hold a special recruitment event for men only - Use Father's Day as another opportunity to recruit male mentors - Piggyback on any events targeting Black males. Mentor Incentives - Provide incentives to male groups; tap into the competitiveness of males and provide a prize for the group that recruits the most male mentors - Solicit coupons and discounts from support of local clothing stores, car dealerships, athletic clubs, barbershops, movie theaters, professional sports teams, etc. - Tap into required community-service for male high school/ college students by providing the program as an opportunity to meet their service obligations Use of Males with a Criminal Record or Limited Available Time (MCR) - Do not throw away any well-meaning and intentioned person just because they do not fit into a specific mold. Find opportunities for them to shine and help your program. While men with a criminal history may not be able to mentor on a one-on-one basis, they can be helpful in program presentations, group meetings, and general volunteering for program administration. Consider how to adapt program guideline to better incorporate this group. They may be great ambassadors to convince Black men of the value of mentoring a young boy to avoid what they endured.

Conclusion

Readying your mentoring program to serve black male youth in a culturally relevant way sets the foundation for effective recruitment and retention of black men as mentors. With these elements in place, a productive social marketing recruitment campaign will employ existing doers to address the right audience with messages that match their motivations, in places and with methods already used by your target population.

Using these strategies, formal mentoring programs will be better equipped to serve young black males well in mentoring relationships with black men, to guide them through the challenges they face on their journey to educational success.

Endnotes

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MENTORING FOR BLACK MALE YOUTH

National Mentoring Resource Center Population Review

Bernadette Sánchez, PhD, DePaul University

Summary

August 2016

This review examines research on mentoring for Blackⁱ boys and is organized around four topics: a) its documented effectiveness; b) the extent to which mentor, youth, and program characteristics influence effectiveness; c) the processes that link mentoring to outcomes in Black male youth; and d) the extent to which efforts to provide mentoring for Black male youth have reached and engaged these youth, been implemented with high quality, and been adopted and sustained by host organizations and settings. There is some preliminary evidence that:

- Both formal and informal mentoring have the potential to benefit Black boys in a range of areas, including academics (e.g., grades), social-emotional well-being (e.g., relationships with others), mental health (e.g., alcohol use), and preventing risky behaviors (e.g., sexual activity).
- Cultural mistrust may influence Black boys' perceptions of their White mentors and thus the quality of their relationships with them.
- Mentoring may be able to lessen the negative effects of racial discrimination on Black boys.
- Group mentoring approaches seem to support Black male youth's social-emotional development through group processes (e.g., unity, brotherhood, trust).
- Mentoring that promotes Black boys' racial identity may in turn lead to positive effects in other aspects of their lives (e.g., academic outcomes). This process may be facilitated by connecting Black male youth with mentors who have shared life experiences; engaging Black men as mentors has the potential to be useful in this regard, although it should be noted that research to inform the possible merits of this strategy is largely lacking.

ⁱ We use the term "Black" as the general racial category in the review, but then use the term "African-American" when it is used as the racial category in specific studies below.

- Research suggests that Black men are more likely to serve as informal rather than formal mentors and that they experience barriers to serving as mentors in formal mentoring programs.
- Developing close and supportive mentoring relationships may be a mechanism by which mentoring promotes positive outcomes in Black boys.
- Black boys may have less access to informal mentors compared to Black girls.

Implications for practice that draw on the findings and conclusions of the review are provided. These include recommendations to:

- Recognize that Black boys are likely to vary in their individual needs and, thus, in the specific types of mentoring supports that might be most effective.
- Take care to ensure that mentors of Black boys receive appropriate training about issues of race, culture, and gender.
- Recruit mentors with appropriate skills (e.g., teaching or advocacy experience) and cultural competency to mentor Black boys effectively.
- Consider activities and strategies that help Black boys to identify, and increase support from, the existing mentoring and resources they have in their lives.
- Treat parents and guardians as true partners in the mentoring process.
- Consider how efforts to provide mentoring for Black boys can be linked to the fight for larger social justice goals for these youth and their communities.

INTRODUCTION

As evidenced by President Obama's My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative,¹ our society has recognized the need to provide more mentoring to boys of color. Specifically, mentoring is one of four key interventions of the MBK Alliance¹ in order to address the needs and opportunity gaps (e.g., in education) of boys of color.

Mentoring has long been a focus within the African-American community as illustrated through the implementation of various forms of culturally focused interventions for their young people (e.g., Rites of Passage programs led by adult leaders,² and as such, the MBK Alliance is a natural fit with existing efforts across the nation.

QUESTIONS

With these considerations as context, the present review addresses the following four questions:

1. What are the demonstrated effects of mentoring for Black male youth?
 2. What factors condition or influence the effectiveness of mentoring for Black male youth?
 3. What intervening processes are most important in linking mentoring to Black male youth outcomes?
 4. To what extent have efforts to provide mentoring to Black male youth reached and engaged these youth, been implemented with high quality, and been adopted and sustained by host organizations and settings?
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This review includes studies about formal and informal mentoring relationships and activities that take place between Black boys (i.e., mentees) and older, more experienced persons (i.e., mentors) who operate in a nonprofessional capacity to provide support for the youth's healthy development (see [What is Mentoring?](#) for more details). A systematic literature search was conducted to find articles, book chapters, and evaluation reports that include findings that address any of the above questions. To be included in this review, research needed to meet the following criteria: a) at least 80% of the youth in the study sample were Black or African-American or, when this was not the case, relevant analyses were conducted on Black male youth specifically; and b) youth were, on average, under the age of 18 years. In total, 18 studies of mentoring of Black male youth fit the preceding criteria and are included in this review. Eleven are evaluations of formal, volunteer-based mentoring programs whereas seven are studies of informal mentoring relationships. All but one were conducted in the United States. Fifteen studies appeared in peer-reviewed scientific journals and three were dissertations.

1. What Are the Demonstrated Effects of Mentoring on Black Male Youth?

BACKGROUND

Several considerations point to the potential value of mentoring for Black male youth. Black boys in the United States face many challenges, many of which stem directly from the failures of key institutions that shape their development and prospects for healthy futures. In schools, for example, Black male students face over-referral for school disciplinary action and special education.³ Similarly, within the criminal justice system, Black children are 18 times more likely than White children to be sentenced as adults.⁴ Scholars have argued that the narrative in our society about Black boys specifically, and Black children generally, is dominated by a problem or deficit perspective;^{3, 5} the narrative is “that Black boys are in peril, that mere survival should be their goal, and that their very futures are uncertain.”³ In part, this narrative may be a reflection of how adults in the lives of Black

boys view them and even how Black boys see themselves.³ For instance, Rowley and colleagues³ cite research indicating that Black parents view their sons as vulnerable and needing protection (which may serve as a barrier to their autonomy and self-efficacy), that teachers have low expectations of Black boys and over-discipline them, and that Black boys are more likely than other race/gender groups to disidentify with academics and engage in stereotypical behaviors that have negative consequences in the classroom and in school.

Even more disturbing is recent experimental research demonstrating that Black boys are viewed as older, less innocent, and less human than White boys.⁶ This research further showed that police officers' dehumanizing views of Black boys was significantly related to their use of force on Black suspects, controlling for how much suspects resisted arrests or were located in high-crime areas. These findings speak directly to a view that Black boys "are not allowed to be children at all"⁶ (p. 541) in our society. Given the dehumanizing views toward Black boys and that important adults view them in a negative light,³ Black boys would potentially benefit from mentoring programs, particularly from mentoring that aims to foster the strengths and resilience of Black boys.^{3,5} It should be noted that there is no reason to expect that mentoring alone can or will reverse the complex and persistent institutional, social, and environmental challenges described above. However, there is a basis for expecting that mentoring holds the potential to empower, engage, and promote the strengths of Black boys and to do so in a manner that is complementary to other interventions and policies that seek systemic changes to more fundamentally improve the life prospects of Black boys.

RESEARCH

Available research has addressed the effects that informal mentoring relationships and formal mentoring programs may have on a variety of outcomes for Black boys, including academic, social-emotional well-being, mental health, and preventing risky behaviors.

Academic. A few studies revealed that mentoring was related to better academic achievement, such as test scores or grades, in Black male youth. In a study of the Helping Hands group mentoring program targeting African-American boys in grades three through eight, Anderson⁷ examined school records for 26 elementary and middle schools over a three-year period. Participants were 722 students in the mentoring program and 722 in a comparison group who were a random sample of African-American male students by each grade. Three cohorts of students were compared. Although there were no statistically significant differences between students in the mentoring program compared to those in the comparison group on math or reading standardized test scores in any of the cohorts, there was more growth during the first and second cohorts (i.e., 2001–2002 and 2002–2003 academic years) in standardized math scores for mentored students compared to control students.⁷ A quasi-experimental study of the Benjamin E. Mays Institute (BEMI) mentoring program with a sample of mostly African-American (83% and 17% Latino) middle school students found that participants in the mentoring program (n = 29) had higher grade point averages (GPA) than the students in the comparison group (n = 32).^{ii,8} It is important to note that the intervention and comparison students did not differ only in whether or not they received mentoring as those in the mentoring program were also in a single sex cluster within a coed school whereas the comparison students were enrolled in coed classes. Thus, it is unclear to what extent the differences between the two groups were because of mentoring, the single- versus mixed-sex classrooms, both or some other factor.

ii Quantitative research findings that are reported in this review are statistically significant, unless otherwise noted.

In an evaluation of the Brotherhood, an after-school group mentoring program for African-American high school boys, Wyatt⁹ reported an increase in GPAs from 2.43 to 2.83 over a three-year period among 307 participants that was not tested for statistical significance. When 16 African-American college students reflected back on their high school experiences in the New Brunswick (NJ) Kappa League mentoring program, they reported that their grades improved after getting involved with the program.¹⁰ Finally, in the Young Men of Distinction program,¹¹ an after-school group mentoring program, it was found that the 40 African-American seventh- and eighth-grade male students had, on average, higher math and language arts grades compared to the 40 in the nonprogram comparison group. However, participants were not randomly assigned to the mentoring program or the control group, and the author did not control for any differences in grades before the mentoring program began. Hence it is unclear whether the program actually caused the academic benefits for students.

In research on informal mentoring, a representative sample of 283 mostly African-American (98%) male youth in Philadelphia between the ages of 10 and 24 (average age of 17.8) from low-income neighborhoods were asked whether they had an informal adult mentor by indicating that “there are adults in my life that I look up to” and that they can go to these adults “to help me through tough situations”.¹² Eighty-six percent of the sample reported having an informal mentor, and it was found that the presence of informal mentors predicted 2.8 times the odds of getting good grades, while controlling for age.

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Mentoring programs targeting Black male students have also reported other kinds of academic and school benefits. For instance, middle school students in the BEMI mentoring program reported higher identification with academics compared to the control group.⁸ Participants in the New Brunswick (NJ) Kappa League mentoring program retrospectively reported school behavior improvements, that they were more confident in school and more motivated to do well in school, and that they were more likely to apply to college after participating in the program.¹⁰ The majority of the African-American high school students of the Brotherhood evaluation reported that the mentoring program helped them with college readiness and with connecting their education to the real world.⁹ Controlling for age, African-American male adolescents with informal adult mentors were more likely to report 2.9 times the odds of feeling safe at school¹² compared to youth without mentors.

Social-emotional well-being. A few studies examined whether mentoring promoted social-emotional outcomes in Black male youth. In a qualitative investigation of 13 African-Caribbean boys with psychological and behavioral difficulties and 5 African-Caribbean adults, who served as mentors, mentors and mentees reported improvements in boys’ communication with their family and new friendships.¹³ Mentors and mentees also discussed that boys learned that they could trust and depend on others and that it is acceptable to ask for and receive support rather than trying to resolve problems on their own and avoid talking about personal issues. Participants also reported that the most important way in which the mentoring program impacted boys was by helping them to become

more empathic, to consider the consequences of their behaviors, and to take responsibility for their actions. In a longitudinal retrospective study of the Beaux Affairs Rites of Passage Program (BAROPP), which targeted African-American male high school students ages 16 to 18 years, former participants (n = 100) who completed the program between 1990 and 2011 and their parents reported that benefits of the program included improved confidence, self-esteem, leadership skills, relationships with others, and responsible behavior.¹⁴ Participants also reported that the program prepared them for their current role as fathers, husbands, and/or mentors. A case study of an Afrocentric therapeutic group mentoring program for African-American boys in the foster care system similarly reported that boys (n = 6) were able to develop healthy and positive relationships with Black male role models.¹⁵ None of the previous studies had a comparison group, and thus, it is possible that the positive changes observed would have occurred without the mentoring programs.

Mental health and risky behaviors. The African-American male children and adolescents in Culyba et al.'s¹² study revealed that, controlling for age, the presence of an informal mentor predicted a lower likelihood of ever using alcohol; getting into a fight at school, being jumped, or having access to a gun; and witnessing violence, seeing someone holding a gun, and seeing someone get shot. Another investigation of informal mentoring relationships of African-American high school seniors (average age = 17.6 years) revealed that male participants (n = 292) with informal mentors had steeper decreases in self-reported depressive symptoms during the five years after high school compared to their male participants without mentors,¹⁶ while controlling for age, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and parental support.

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The presence of an informal mentor predicted a **lower likelihood** of ever using **alcohol**; getting into a **fight** at school, being **jumped**, or having **access to a gun**; and witnessing **violence**, seeing someone **holding a gun**, and **seeing someone get shot**.

.....

In an evaluation of the Adult Identity Mentoring (AIM) program, 20 seventh-grade classrooms were randomly assigned to either the six-week AIM program or a standard health education curriculum.¹⁷ Based on the theory of possible selves, the goal of the AIM program was to reduce sexual risk behaviors by increasing youth's interest in successful adult development. Students were encouraged to think about their desired future and how their current risk behaviors could negatively affect their future goals through the use of small groups and role models that created and sustained group norms of delaying or abstaining from sexual activity. There were 156 African-American students in the study between the ages of 12 and 14. Findings indicated that the AIM program influenced positive changes in sexual behavior among boys. Specifically, one year after the intervention and controlling for baseline differences, fewer male students who were in the AIM program (47%) reported any sexual intercourse than male students who received the standard health education curriculum (54%). Furthermore, for participants who were previously sexually active, 77% of boys (n = 20) who received the AIM intervention were still sexually active at the one-year follow-up compared to 92% (n = 11) of boys who were in the standard health curriculum, although this finding was not tested for statistical significance.

CONCLUSION

1. Available research points to a range of potential benefits of both formal and informal mentoring for African-American boys, including in the areas of academic, social-emotional well-being, mental health, and preventing risky behaviors. However, because of limitations in the rigor of this research (e.g., there have been few evaluations in which African-American boys are randomly assigned to mentoring versus a control group), the evidence in support of such benefits is at present tentative and preliminary.

2. What Factors Condition or Influence the Effectiveness of Mentoring for Black Male Youth?

BACKGROUND

As briefly discussed below, the effects of mentoring on Black male youth might vary because of program, mentor, or youth characteristics.

Program characteristics. Practitioners serving Black male youth have often developed and implemented culturally tailored mentoring programs. Theoretically, these types of programs may offer enhanced benefits for Black boys because the approaches may be consistent with their cultural values and take into consideration the cultural context of the lives of Black boys. A meta-analysis of mental health interventions targeting emotional and/or behavioral problems in youth of color found that culturally tailored interventions did not differ significantly in their effectiveness compared to standard interventions.¹⁸ A similar analysis of culturally tailored mentoring programs has not been conducted. However, as discussed below, there are evaluations of several individual programs of this type.

Some mentoring programs for Black male youth have had what Resnicow and colleagues¹⁹ refer to as “deep structure” adaptations. These types of adaptations are focused on addressing the cultural, psychological, social, environmental, and historical factors that influence the behaviors of the target group¹⁹ and thus, theoretically, could be of particular value in supporting Black boys. An example of a deep structure adaptation is when a program is designed to incorporate cultural values or traditions of Black or African-American culture. Both BAROPP¹⁴ and the Brotherhood⁹ were aimed at African-American high school boys and incorporated Nguzo Saba into their curricula. The Nguzo Saba are eight principles or values that serve as the basis for Afrocentric movements in the U.S.: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, faith, and respect. These values have been used to connect African-Americans to their heritage and understand their experiences with racism, slavery, and the influence of the dominant European worldview and culture.²⁰

Further examples of programs incorporating deep structural adaptations include the Umoja mentoring program, in which African drumming circles (Spir-rhythms) were utilized as a cultural arts tool to provide group mentoring to African-American male adolescents.²¹ Utsey et al.’s¹⁵ therapeutic group mentoring program for African-American boys in the foster care system, for example, emphasized the following principles: a) group above self, b) respect for self and others, c) responsibility for self and community, d) reciprocity, and e) authenticity. Implicit in the design

of several programs is also the idea that effectiveness may be enhanced when attention is given to cultural tailoring with respect to not only race, but also issues of gender and its intersection with race. For instance, in the aforementioned therapeutic group mentoring program, participants learned what it means to be an African-American male in an anti-Black society¹⁵ and in BAROPP youth received Black manhood development training.¹⁴

Also of note are mentoring and other kinds of culturally tailored interventions that have been designed with the aim of addressing the achievement gap between African-American and White students. Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht²² found that African-American and Latino youth who were randomly assigned to mentors who received training and support in the use of messages and activities that were directed toward changing mentees' beliefs about intelligence (i.e., fixed vs. malleable) in order to address stereotype threats exhibited greater improvement in standardized test scores during the transition to middle school compared to those assigned to mentors who did not receive this type of training and support. In related research, Yeager et al.²³ conducted a series of studies to investigate the use of "wise feedback" from teachers as a strategy for breaking the cycle of cultural mistrust toward education among African-American middle school students. Wise feedback referred to the student's teacher communicating high expectations for the student and the belief that the student can achieve them. These researchers found that students who received wise feedback from their White teachers on an essay that they wrote were more likely to turn in a revised essay, improved their essay scores, and even improved their grades compared to African-American students who did not receive wise feedback. Some of these effects were not observed in the White students in the studies or the effects were stronger for African-American students compared to White students. For instance, White students' grades in the wise feedback condition did not improve as they did for African-American students, thus suggesting greater sensitivity of African-American students to wise feedback. Yeager et al.²³ did not find gender differences in their research. However, these findings combined with the results from the Good et al.²² study suggest ideas about factors that, when incorporated into formal or informal mentoring, could enhance benefits for African-American boys.

An approach in which Black boys are viewed as partners in the delivery of mentoring rather than only as recipients of mentoring may influence the effectiveness of mentoring programs for these youth. For instance, the Young Men for Change,²⁴ a school-based group mentoring program for African-American male high school students, utilized a critical pedagogy²⁵ approach in the curriculum. Rather than using a hierarchical approach in which the mentor imparted knowledge onto the mentee, mentors and mentees co-constructed knowledge and reflected on the institutional and societal forces that influence their experiences as African-American teenage boys. This approach challenges the status quo and is used to empower youth to understand their life circumstances, make choices, and to take action to improve their lives.²⁴ Based on critical pedagogy, the Young Men for Change curriculum had three phases: a) dialogue, in which arts-based activities were used to help mentees express themselves emotionally without sacrificing their masculinity, b) problem posing, in which mentees were encouraged to make connections between their own lives and the broader society; and c) taking action, in which mentees generated and implemented strategies for creating social change.

Program features that are responsive to the existing relationships and sources of support that Black male youth have available to them also have the potential to be important. DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper's²⁶ meta-analyses revealed that more parental involvement in mentoring programs promoted positive youth outcomes. In the Village Model of Care mentoring program that targeted African-American male and female adolescents, more parental involvement, as reflected in program staff's ratings of parental participation, was related to greater increases in GPA.²⁷ However, more parental involvement was also related to higher parental level of education, and thus, the GPA increases could be due to parents' educational level rather than parental involvement.

Finally, another program characteristic not to be overlooked as potentially significant is dosage—that is, the amount and intensity of mentoring that is received by each participating youth. The evaluation of the Village Model of Care²⁷ program found that students who attended half or more of the group mentoring sessions had greater increases in their GPA from the first to fourth quarter than those who attended less than half of the sessions. Although participating in the mentoring program longer could theoretically lead to higher academic achievement, it is possible that the students who attended more group mentoring sessions were simply different (e.g., more motivated, come from more stable homes) than those who attended fewer sessions, and thus they would have had higher GPAs regardless.

Mentor characteristics. A mentor characteristic that has received attention in the literature is whether cross- versus same-race mentoring relationships matter in youth mentoring programs. There are no studies, however, that have examined the implications of matching Black male youth specifically with a Black mentor. A study of 74 African-American male college students who were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions in which they listened to mock mentor-mentee interactions revealed that participants rated African-American faculty mentors as more culturally sensitive and a more credible source of help than White faculty mentors.²⁸ Rhodes, Reddy, Grossman, and Lee²⁹ compared cross- and same-race mentoring relationships in a sample of youth of color (i.e., African-American, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, Biracial) in the Big Brothers Big Sisters community-based mentoring program. Among male mentees specifically, and controlling for the length of the mentoring relationship, Rhodes et al.²⁹ found that boys in same-race matches (n = 70) had smaller decreases in confidence in school work and feelings of self-worth at 18 months after starting the mentoring program compared to boys in mentoring relationships with European-American mentors (n = 39). No statistically significant differences were found, however, on several other outcomes (e.g., grades, skipping class, alcohol use). DuBois et al.'s³⁰ meta-analysis of youth mentoring programs did *not* find that programs that specifically matched youth to mentors by race/ethnicity were more effective than programs that did not. Summarizing the extant evidence, Sánchez and colleagues³¹ concluded that “findings of research that compares whether being in a cross- versus same-race relationship [is beneficial] are mixed and not suggestive of the importance of racial/ethnic similarity per se” (p. 149).

Two other mentor characteristics that could influence the effectiveness of mentoring for Black boys are mentor gender and the shared life experiences between mentors and mentees. Theoretically, having a male mentor with similar life experiences could help facilitate closeness in the relationship and foster positive identification of a Black male youth with his mentor.

Youth characteristics. One factor to consider that could influence the effectiveness of mentoring for Black male youth is the youth's experiences with life stressors, such as racial discrimination. Resilience theory suggests that youth who have faced adverse situations, but have access to resources, can avoid negative outcomes.³² Thus, theoretically, mentoring is a strategy that might be especially helpful for Black boys who face significant risks and stressors in their environments.

Interdependencies of program, mentor, and youth characteristics. It should be noted, too, that all of the above types of factors (i.e., program, mentor, and youth characteristics) have the potential to interact in shaping the effectiveness of mentoring for Black male youth. Illustratively, with regard to cultural mistrust, research on Black male college students has revealed evidence that cultural mistrust may influence their mentoring relationships with White mentors.²⁸ Specifically, students' perceived that African-American mentors were more culturally sensitive than White mentors, but this effect was strongest among participants with the highest levels of cultural mistrust toward White mentors. This suggests the potential for same-race mentoring relationships to be particularly important for youth with higher levels of cultural mistrust and thus implicates youth and mentor characteristics together. Yet, the potential also exists for this type of dependency to be mitigated by program practices, such as training for White mentors aimed at promoting use of culturally responsive approaches to supporting Black male youth (e.g., wise feedback).

RESEARCH

Youth and families. With relevance to the potential importance of fostering family resources, the mentors in the Garraway and Pistrang¹³ study of African-Caribbean boys discussed that they provided support and guidance to their mentees' families. These mentors perceived their efforts as having helped to improve parents' attitudes toward mentoring and in turn made their mentoring more beneficial for their mentees. With regard to youth characteristics, in the evaluation of the Helping Hands mentoring program referred to above, it was found that there was an interaction between the number of years in the program and whether the student had a disability^{iii, 7}. Specifically, participating in Helping Hands for more years was related more strongly to higher standardized math test scores for students with disabilities than for those without.

Program dosage. With relevance to program dosage, in the evaluation of the Helping Hands program there was a trend in that more years in the program was related to higher standardized reading test scores.⁷ Further, students who participated in this program for at least one year had higher reading scores than students in the control group, whereas there was no statistically significant difference in reading scores for students who participated in the program less than a year compared to the control group.

Program approach. Researcher observations of the Young Men for Change program and interviews of 11 mentees in this program²⁴ suggested that the critical pedagogy approach used in the program seemed to offer several benefits for participants. First, the dialogue phase appeared to create a sense of belonging and to help mentees express their emotions within a safe space, both of which may have improved their social-emotional well-being. Second, it also seemed that students' critical thinking skills improved as a result of the problem-posing phase. Last, the praxis (taking action) phase, in which students organized a community forum to dispel negative stereotypes about

iii Disability status was gathered from school records, but the author did not specify the type of disability.

African-American boys and men, appeared to empower students to utilize and further develop their leadership skills.

Mentor characteristics. With relevance to the potential significance of mentor gender for Black male youth, analyses of data from a study of informal mentoring relationships among 659 African-American older adolescents found no difference in school outcomes among male participants based on the gender of the reported role model.³³ However, another study of informal mentoring using data from a nationally representative sample found that reporting a male mentor during adolescence was associated with an average 88% increase in self-reported economic earnings in adulthood among both African-American boys and girls, whereas the presence of a female mentor was not significantly related to earnings, controlling for gender, age, educational attainment, and childhood income.³⁴ It was also found that African-American male adolescents who did not have a father figure and who reported a male mentor reported earning 214% more during adulthood than youth without a father figure and without a mentor. They further found that African-American adolescents without a father figure who had a male mentor earned more during adulthood than African-American adolescents with a father figure.³⁴ Although not unique to boys, these latter findings suggest that the presence of an informal male mentor during adolescence may be particularly important for the future economic earnings of African-American boys without a father figure in their lives.

African-American male adolescents who **did not have a father figure but had a male mentor reported earning 214% more during adulthood** than youth without a father figure and without a mentor.

Some research also has touched on the potential significance of whether Black male youth and their mentors share life experiences. In the Garraway and Pistrang study,¹³ mentors and mentees reported that shared life experiences (e.g., similar school struggles, being an African-Caribbean boy/man in the United Kingdom) helped mentors have empathy for their mentees, and in turn, mentees trusted their mentors. When asked about cultural similarity with their mentors, mentees stated that it was not so much the shared cultural identity that was important as it was their shared life experiences. However, as the authors state, the boys' and mentors' shared cultural experiences and shared life experiences (e.g., discrimination) were inextricably linked to being an African-Caribbean boy growing up in the United Kingdom. All but two of the mentoring programs that were the focus of research considered in this literature review recruited African-American men exclusively as mentors. As such, a combination of a shared cultural identity and similar life experiences may have helped to promote bonds between Black boys and their Black male mentors and thus contributed to the observed positive outcomes.

Life stressors. A study examined whether mentoring lessened the negative effects of racial discrimination on youth outcomes³⁵ among 1,942 African-American adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 (41% were male). The researchers controlled for age, family structure, social class, self-reported grades, and daily stressors in the statistical analyses. They found that among boys without a mentor, more interpersonal racial discrimination (i.e., youth's perceptions of the frequency of routine and subtle experiences of unfair treatment during the last year; e.g., "others being afraid of you," "people acting as if you are not smart") predicted more school suspensions and less

school engagement. However, for boys who reported an informal mentor, racial discrimination was related to fewer school suspensions and more school engagement. One potential interpretation for these findings is that mentoring helped to reduce or buffer the effects of experiences of racial discrimination among African-American boys.

CONCLUSIONS

1. It is possible that mentoring programs for Black male youth are more effective when they take into consideration Black/African-American culture, history, and values in their design and implementation (i.e., are culturally tailored); research addressing this possibility is lacking.
2. Cultural mistrust may influence Black boys' perceptions of their White mentors, which may influence the quality of their relationships. Research directly addressing this possibility, however, is lacking.
3. Group mentoring, rather than one-on-one, is a model that may be more culturally congruent with African-American culture and may be useful in promoting brotherhood and belonging; research, however, has not compared the effectiveness of group versus one-on-one mentoring for Black boys.
4. Available research suggests that mentors and teachers who provide feedback to African-American students emphasizing that they have high expectations of their students/mentees, that they believe that their students/mentees can meet these expectations, and that they believe that their students/mentees can grow their abilities could be more effective in improving the academic outcomes of African-American youth; research addressing these possibilities specifically for Black male youth, however, has not yet been conducted.
5. Mentor gender (i.e., male mentors) and similar life experiences (and perhaps shared cultural similarity) between mentors and mentees may be important in the mentoring relationships of Black boys; however, research addressing these possibilities is limited.
6. It appears that mentoring has the potential to lessen the negative effects of interpersonal racial discrimination on Black boys, although available research is again limited and preliminary.

3. What Intervening Processes Are Most Important in Linking Mentoring to Black Male Youth Outcomes?

BACKGROUND

Rhodes'³⁶ theoretical framework of youth mentoring suggests that one of the processes by which mentoring influences positive youth outcomes is through youth's identity development. Of particular importance to Black boys could be strengthening their ethnic and racial identity. A recent literature review concluded that a positive ethnic and racial identity is related to better academic, psychosocial, and health outcomes in African-American adolescents.³⁷

Theory and research in youth mentoring also underscore the importance of the quality of mentoring relationships in linking participation in mentoring programs to positive youth outcomes.³⁶ Specific aspects of quality that are important in promoting positive youth outcomes is relationship closeness and emotional intimacy³⁸ as well as the kind of social support provided to youth.³⁹ Stereotypical notions about male friendships and relationships suggest that boys would not have a need for emotional intimacy like girls.⁴⁰ However, research shows that boys desire emotional intimacy and vulnerability in their mentoring relationships.⁴¹ Mentoring programs that target Black male youth tend to emphasize a group mentoring approach not only because it is culturally congruent with communal cultures but also because it is expected to promote bonding and brotherhood. Based on a shared experience of oppression, African-American men and boys have historically valued loyalty, connection, and emotional expression with other Black males (e.g., Million Man March).^{40, 42} Research delving into racially and ethnically diverse boys' friendships, including African-Americans, reveals a strong desire for emotional intimacy in their male friendships, but this emotional intimacy decreases and distrust toward other boys increases as they age during adolescence.⁴⁰ To the extent that mentoring can offset such trends, this could be an important process linking formal and informal mentoring experiences to positive outcomes for Black boys.

In line with this possibility, research on boys of color in group mentoring programs has pointed toward the importance of feelings of brotherhood and emotional connection that are developed among participants. A qualitative study was conducted of 14 African-American and Latino male adolescents in the Umoja Network for Young Men (UMOJA), a school-based, group, male mentoring program at an alternative high school for students who are overage and under-credited (i.e., at least two years behind in age and credit toward the high school diploma).⁴³ Based on observations of the group mentoring sessions, observations of the students in their English class, and three focus-group discussions over a two-year period, Jackson et al.⁴³ found that participants reported feeling a sense of unity, brotherhood, and reciprocal love, which referred to openly expressing love and care for one other and in turn feeling loved and cared for. They also reported a collective responsibility in which they felt they were responsible for one another's school success and emotional well-being. Finally, the research⁴³ found that trust was established in the mentoring program, which enabled students to open up and talk about their personal lives. The researchers concluded that group processes seemed to have contributed to students feeling that they have the potential to succeed and to have higher personal aspirations (e.g., complete school). Similarly, the Young Men for Change program staff engaged in a dialogue phase to allow African-American high school boys to express their emotions and to create a safe space for peers and adults to support and care for one another without sacrificing their manhood.²⁴

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Black boys live in a society in which they are stereotyped as **hyper masculine**, and research suggests that their environment may influence them to behave in **negatively stereotypical ways**. For instance, Swanson, Cunningham, and Spencer⁴⁴ found that Black male adolescents who reported negative perceptions of Black males in their community were **more likely** to report **exaggerated stereotypical ideas about male attitudes** (bravado).

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Theoretically, promoting an ethos of care and brotherhood may be a mechanism for promoting positive outcomes in Black boys in particular because it helps to directly combat the negative images and stereotypes projected upon them in their schools and communities.^{24, 43} Black boys live in a society in which they are stereotyped as hyper masculine, and research suggests that their environment may influence them to behave in negatively stereotypical ways. For instance, Swanson, Cunningham, and Spencer⁴⁴ found that Black male adolescents who reported negative perceptions of Black males in their community were more likely to report exaggerated stereotypical ideas about male attitudes (bravado). In contrast, those with positive teacher experiences were less likely to report bravado attitudes. The researchers posited that participants' bravado attitudes were a coping strategy to deal with school and community stressors. The extent to which the mentoring relationships and experiences of Black boys promote positive images and emotional connection to other Black males thus could be important in processes linking them to positive adaptation and healthy development.

RESEARCH

There is some research that tests the processes that link mentoring to positive (or potentially negative) outcomes in Black boys. Hurd, Sánchez, Zimmerman, and Caldwell⁴⁵ found in a study of 541 African-American older adolescents (average age = 17.8 years) that the reported presence of an informal mentor indirectly predicted the belief that school was important for future success through participants' racial identity or their positive perceptions about people from their own race (e.g., I am proud of Black people). Evidence in support of this pathway did not differ significantly across male and female study participants, thus supporting its relevance to Black male youth in particular.

A longitudinal study of the informal mentoring relationships of 354 rural African-American high school seniors found that mentoring relationships with more instrumental and emotional support and affectively positive interactions predicted less anger, rule-breaking behavior, and aggression in youth about one year later,⁴⁶ while controlling for earlier problem behaviors, youth gender, intervention dosage, and first choice of mentor. The authors tested these associations separately for boys and girls in the study and found no differences. Thus, these findings stand for male participants.

Some qualitative research findings are in line with the idea that emotionally close relationships between youth and mentors may be an important mechanism. Based on findings of their qualitative research, Garraway and Pistrang¹³ concluded that African-Caribbean boys' relationships with their mentors afforded them the opportunity to learn how to ask for and receive support and that this helped them trust and depend on others. Some evidence also suggests that information and guidance provided by mentors may promote positive outcomes for Black male youth. For example, participants in the New Brunswick Kappa League program reported their mentors' support and guidance is what helped them apply, enroll and prepare for college.¹⁰ This finding is broadly in line with research considered earlier in this review suggesting the potential for guidance from mentors to be beneficial for promoting positive academic outcomes when directed toward countering the effects of negative stereotypes and feelings of cultural mistrust within the educational context.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Theory and research suggest that developing a positive ethnic and racial identity could be important in linking mentoring to positive outcomes in other areas (e.g., academics) for Black male youth; however, research directly examining this possibility is lacking.
2. Group mentoring programs that develop a sense of unity, brotherhood, caring, and trust among program members may be particularly helpful to Black male youth; however, research on the role of these group processes in the outcomes for Black boys in mentoring is limited.
3. Developing close relationships with mentors may benefit Black boys by providing them with opportunities to develop healthy help-seeking strategies and to trust and depend on others for support; research addressing these processes, however, is very limited.
4. Mentoring relationships with more instrumental and emotional support may prevent behavioral problems in Black boys, but research is limited.
5. Information and guidance provided by mentors may have the potential to promote positive educational outcomes for Black boys, but research is again lacking.

4. Have Mentoring Programs and Supports Reached and Engaged Black Male Youth, Been Implemented with High Quality, and Been Adopted and Sustained?

BACKGROUND

Organizations such as the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey have provided a Readiness to Engage Report Card for programs that are specifically interested in serving Black male youth.⁴⁷ They ask that relevant stakeholders and staff members examine whether their organization and program meet certain criteria in order to work with Black male youth, such as whether they engage from both a race equity and gender lens, whether they have engaged in a social justice analysis of the outcomes of Black male youth, and whether they seek to address the needs and challenges that Black male youth experience specifically versus their peers. In related work, MENTOR The National Mentoring Partnership⁴⁸ created a guide for organizations, programs, and mentors who work with Black male youth. The guide can be used to facilitate trainings aiming to prepare mentors to adequately serve Black male youth, better understand their own biases and assumptions when working with them, understand how our communities and contexts influence Black male youth's development, and to guide mentors in facilitating the positive growth of Black male youth. Informed by needs assessments discussed below, Grimes⁴⁷ provided suggestions for a culturally relevant social marketing campaign to recruit African-American men to serve as mentors as well as suggestions on how to overcome the identified barriers. Theoretically, resources such as these could be valuable for ensuring that mentoring programs intended to serve Black male youth are more effective in reaching and engaging these youth, implemented with high quality, and sustained over time.

RESEARCH

*The Mentoring Effect*⁴⁹ study revealed that approximately two in three of the 18- to 24-year-old young people surveyed in this nationally representative study report having had a mentor while growing up. It is unclear if Black male youth are more or less likely to report having a mentor in their lives. Notably, *The Mentoring Effect* study found that African-American youth, in general (i.e., without consideration of gender), were significantly more likely to report having had either an informal or formal mentor in comparison to White and Latino youth. Other research, however, suggests possible gaps in access to certain kinds of mentors for Black male youth. In a study of 1,929 African-American youth between the ages of 12 and 18, it was found that girls were more likely to report an unrelated mentor in their community (e.g., minister, teacher, counselor, older friend).³⁵ An older study of 122 Black and White high school students⁵⁰ similarly found Black girls (58%) to be more likely to report an impactful relationship with a nonparent adult male than were Black boys (41%). Furthermore, Black girls reported more grandparent involvement in discussions about peer relationships compared to their Black male counterparts.⁵⁰

A potential factor to consider in reaching Black male youth is recruiting Black men to serve as mentors in order to provide Black boys with successful models from their community. Two needs assessments were conducted to understand the barriers for African-American men serving as volunteers in youth mentoring programs. In a survey study of 576 African-American men across the United States, only 7% reported that they were involved with formal mentoring programs.⁵¹

Although this finding suggests the possibility that African-American men might be less likely to volunteer for formal mentoring programs, comparative data (e.g., corresponding rates for White men and other men of color) are lacking to determine if this is the case. Importantly, too, there is evidence from a focus-group study that African-American men may be more inclined to volunteer in different kinds of community-based programs or as informal mentors to youth in various settings (e.g., church, fraternities, 100 Black Men⁵²). This finding is consistent with an earlier MENTOR⁵³ study that found that non-Whites are more likely to serve as informal rather than formal mentors. The previous studies revealed multiple barriers, among Black men, to volunteering as formal mentors in traditional programs. Examples are time constraints and concerns about making a long-term commitment, lack of information or misinformation about formal programs or about mentoring African-American male youth, mistrust toward government sponsored programs, and a need for mentoring themselves.

There is also some research that reports the dosage of mentoring that Black male youth receive in their programs as well as the level of parental involvement. In the Helping Hands school-based mentoring program for African-American boys, the majority (n = 223) participated in the program for one school year, while 77 participated for two years and 38 for three years.⁷ The Village Model of Care evaluation included a rating for parent participation in the program. It was found that program

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staff rated the participation of a third (n = 88) of the mentees' parents as *good* to *excellent* whereas the remaining 145 parents were rated as *fair* to *poor*. Incorporating opportunities and support for parental involvement has been found to be related to greater effectiveness in evaluations of youth mentoring programs.²⁶

CONCLUSIONS

1. Various resources are available that may be helpful to organizations and programs in determining if they are ready to adequately serve Black boys within a mentoring framework and for building their capacity in areas such as mentor training and recruitment; although in many cases informed by available research, these resources have not been examined with respect to their potential to benefit programs in areas such as reach and engagement, quality of implementation, and sustainability.
2. It appears that Black boys may have less access to various kinds of informal mentors in their communities compared to Black girls; therefore, the need for engagement in formal mentoring programs may be especially high for male youth within the Black community.
3. Research suggests that Black men are more likely to serve as informal rather than formal mentors and that they experience barriers to serving as mentors in formal mentoring programs.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(Mike Garringer, *MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership*)

The review of the evidence around mentoring young Black males above is helpful in highlighting just how difficult it can be to determine the effectiveness of mentoring (and factors that *influence* that effectiveness) for specific groups of youth in real-world applications. In spite of the fact that many mentoring programs are geared specifically toward youth of color, or boys of color in particular, the youth mentoring field to date has generated very little concrete evidence that mentoring can be broadly impactful for Black male youth and even less information about the specific strategies or factors that can ensure that their mentoring relationships are beneficial, both in terms of individual success and in addressing long-standing social barriers and injustices.

There are several reasons for this dearth of strong evidence, but two stick out as being especially challenging:

- Most program evaluations either don't examine differential effects for certain groups of youth participants or, even if they wanted to, lack the large number of mentees needed to generate meaningful statistical power in examining outcomes for subsets of youth.
- Within a category like Black male youth, there is still tremendous diversity that makes it hard to talk in absolutes about what "works": urban vs rural, high poverty vs middle class, American-born vs immigrant, high individual risk vs low individual risk, and so on. As with many other groups of youth, it can be very challenging to talk about effective practices without also painting them with a broad (and often stereotypical) brush.

Yet, in spite of these challenges, meaningful public policy efforts like [My Brother's Keeper](#) and the [Campaign for Black Male Achievement](#) have put considerable energy into promoting mentoring as a cornerstone tool and intervention in the fight for equality and better outcomes for the nation's young Black men. We have every reason to believe, on paper, that mentoring is an invaluable resource for these young people in particular. It makes both theoretical and conceptual sense, especially in light of more general research on mentoring's effectiveness for youth with higher levels of risk and limited social capital. But the fact that Dr. Sánchez had only 19 studies to draw from in this review—and that those studies often had little in common in terms of the questions or programming they examined—illustrates just how challenging it is to determine "what works" for mentoring this group of youth. Our conceptualization of the value often far outpaces the actual science.

But that doesn't mean that practitioners are totally in the dark about how to design effective services for Black male youth. Given the lack of definitive answers in the research base, what should mentoring practitioners keep in mind as they think about serving Black male youth more effectively?

1. **DON'T ASSUME THAT ALL BLACK MALE YOUTH WILL NEED THE SAME MENTORING.**

One of the biggest challenges in serving any subset of youth is determining how to meet the broader, collective needs of that group while also allowing for mentoring to be tailored to the needs of the

individual. This certainly comes into play when thinking about Black boys and young men in our programs. As noted previously, each individual will have diverse needs, life histories, and life goals, even if there are some aspects of being Black in our society that are perhaps more universal.

Pending evidence to the contrary, programs should avoid assuming that youth must have a particular “flavor” of mentoring based on their race or background. This is a trap that much of the practice literature (activity guides, training curricula, etc.) on mentoring boys, or boys of color, can fall into. These types of materials tend to emphasize the general struggles of the group and thus at least implicitly assume that all involved in a program (e.g., all Black males) will have the same viewpoints and lived experience and thus will benefit from the same messages and mentoring approach. That may not always be the case and programs should avoid making too many assumptions here.

Now, there is nothing wrong with operating a targeted program that does specific things for a specific group, and many programs serving boys of color do exactly that. But the type of mentoring that a Black male youth from the suburbs who is exploring college options may be radically different than the mentoring a young man exposed to extreme violence in an inner-city neighborhood might need. A Black child who just arrived from Somalia will need different support than a young man whose family has been in the same house for generations. So look below the surface level and learn the details about why Black male youth wind up at your program’s doors. What do they need help with individually? And are there themes that seem more universal? If your program serves a diverse array of kids, what can you say about the needs of the Black boys that is substantively different than the needs of other groups? By considering these types of nuances, you can be sure that the services you design and the mentor preparation you offer will be relevant and meaningful to these youth, both at an individual and aggregate level.

2. **PROPER TRAINING OF MENTORS IN ASPECTS OF RACE AND CULTURE MAY BE CRITICAL.**

Even though we just emphasized that programs should look at these youth at a more individual level, there are some universal things programs can do with the aim of helping make mentoring a good fit for the Black male youth they serve. Perhaps the most important is training mentors to be comfortable, respectful, and effective in talking about issues of race, culture, ethnicity, and social justice with youth of color. It’s been a few years since the mentoring field has done a thorough study on who exactly serves as mentors (although MENTOR plans on doing exactly this in 2017), but most estimates indicate that the majority of volunteer mentors are individuals who identify as White while the majority of mentees identify as being youth of color. Given that the typical mentoring relationship involves this racial

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Given that the typical mentoring relationship involves this racial divide (as well as equally challenging class divides), it seems essential, ethically, if not for reasons of fostering measurable effectiveness, that **mentoring programs serving Black male youth train mentors to be culturally responsive, competent, and even humble** (this term implies that “competency” is a never-ending process of personal growth and reflection and that no one individual is ever perfectly culturally competent).

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One first step in this type of training is to work with mentors to unpack their own understandings and biases around race and culture. They arguably must do this in order to understand the lens through which they see the world—including race and ethnicity—and to recognize their privilege, their own personal history, and how those factors shape their understanding of other people and cultures. It may be difficult for mentors to help youth think about their own racial identities if they have not explored their own and may struggle to demonstrate cultural competence and understanding if they have not unpacked their own histories and biases to some degree.

In addition to this exploration of self, there are several specific training topics that may be particularly useful when mentoring Black male youth:

- Identity development and how to foster it in others (such as by negating stereotype threats or developing positive mind-sets).
- Strategies and activity ideas for exploring race, ethnicity, and culture.
- Developing a “critical consciousness” that allows youth to respond to and even thrive within institutions and environments steeped in racism and inequality.
- Strategies for sharing one’s own culture and values in a mentoring relationship while also accepting others’.
- Helping youth understand and positively address experiences of racism in their communities.
- Taking a strengths-based approach (these youth and their families have access to far more social capital, and other forms of capital, than people often recognize).

Mentors, especially those who are mentoring youth with lives very different from their own, may routinely need meaningful training to be able to successfully navigate the choppy waters of race and ethnicity. The “Recommended Reading and Resources” section at the end of this review offers some materials that may help programs with developing an effective curriculum.

3. RECRUIT MENTORS WHO HAVE THE RIGHT SKILLS AND VALUES TO MENTOR BLACK MALE YOUTH EFFECTIVELY.

Every mentoring program tries to recruit mentors that they feel are a good fit for the program, but programs can sometimes focus too narrowly on race and gender when thinking about the ideal mentors for Black boys. Programs serving this population are encouraged to think more holistically about the characteristics that would make someone a good fit to work with a young man of color. This builds on the idea above about taking a deeper look at the needs of the youth who come into your

program and thinking about them as individuals and not a homogenous group. Too often, mentoring programs think of this aspect of their work reflexively or through a narrow lens and assume, despite lack of strong evidence, that Black boys can really only be mentored by Black men. Although there are many good reasons to consider such same-race, same-gender matches (as detailed in Dr. Sánchez's review above), the reality is that there may be other lived experiences and personal histories that would make someone an effective mentor to a Black child or teen. Other cultures and groups can experience marginalization, prejudice, or systemic barriers. You may find that plenty of other characteristics beyond just race or ethnicity make someone a good fit for the youth you serve. We already have some hints from research that programs may be more effective when mentors take a teaching and advocacy role (this was a major finding of the 2011 DuBois meta-analysis) and, given that many mentors for Black youth will be discussing serious community problems or institutional failures and addressing systemic racism, experience in those roles may be especially salient here.

One area that could be useful to be particularly mindful of during recruitment and screening is the willingness of the potential mentor to engage openly and honestly about issues of race and culture. It stands to reason that engaging in this work with young Black men, and going through the personal reflection and training recommended above, takes someone who has an open mind and the right motivations. With this in mind, programs may be well-advised to avoid volunteers who don't seem open to reflecting on their own biases or privilege, as well as those who see mentoring one child as their opportunity to address widespread social ills. The last thing boys of color need is someone who is set on "fixing" them or who does not respect the cultural values and experiences of the youth and families you serve. And these are traits that can cut across adults of all races; as such, don't assume that just because a potential mentor has the same background or life experience that they are necessarily going to be a good fit for the work your program will ask them to do. Make sure that your recruitment messages are clear about what the mentoring you provide these youth looks like. And make sure that your vision for an ideal mentor goes beyond skin deep.

4. CONSIDER ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES THAT GET YOUNG BLACK MALES TO RECOGNIZE THE MENTORING THEY DO HAVE IN THEIR LIVES AND TO FIND ADDITIONAL MENTORS.

In early 2015, the MENTOR held a roundtable discussion with several prominent mentoring providers, informal mentors, and community representatives to talk about the mentoring that happens in the communities of boys and young men of color. The participants in this focus group expressed a frustration that the boys and young men they were working with often didn't recognize the mentoring they *did have* in their lives. Yes, they could use more (we all could), but there was a consensus that it can sometimes be hard for young Black men to see that they do have mentors in the various institutions and community settings where they spend time (sports leagues, school, church, local business, etc.).

Programs may consider activities that allow mentees to map out the array of caring adults they have in their lives. They may benefit from seeing that there is more support available to them than previously thought. This may also help them identify aspects of their life where mentoring, or a specific type of mentor, is missing.

In addition to more purposefully counting the mentoring these youth do receive, programs can consider teaching youth how to identify potential new mentors and how to ask for this type of help in the future. While this is arguably a good thing to teach all youth, Black male youth in particular might benefit from this type of skill building as they try to navigate systems and institutions in which they may not always feel welcomed or have a sense of belonging. Teaching a young person how to find their *next* mentors in life may ultimately be the most valuable thing a program can do. (For further information on the research on this type of mentoring approach, please see the National Mentoring Resource Center review of [Youth-Initiated Mentoring](#), which was rated as “Promising” by our Research Board and is further detailed in the accompanying [insights for practitioners](#).)

5. MAKE SURE THAT PARENTS AND GUARDIANS ARE TREATED AS PARTNERS, NOT OBSTACLES IN THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP.

As with the mentor-youth relationship, the relationship between program staff and the parents of Black mentees can also be fraught with cultural misunderstandings, differing values, and biases. Programs should strongly consider providing cultural competence training to all staff and make sure that parents are engaged in the program and involved in meaningful ways throughout the matching and monitoring and support processes. Once again, this is inherently good advice for dealing with *all* parents and guardians, but as we have more research to go on, it could turn out to be especially helpful in ensuring that boys of color and their families feel welcome in the program and that they have a strong working relationship with the mentor and staff on behalf of their child.

6. FIGHT FOR LARGER SOCIAL JUSTICE GOALS IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

The famous religious scholar William Sloane Coffin once said, “To show compassion for an individual without also showing concern for the structures of society that make him an object of compassion is to be sentimental rather than loving.” The mentoring movement needs to make sure that its work does not slip into sentimentality. The last two or three years have seen a tremendous shift in the conversation about race in America as events in Ferguson, Baltimore, and beyond have cast new light on the ways in which Black America is treated by institutions and systems and how citizens should respond to the injustice they see happening around them.

Mentoring programs are encouraged to be bold actors in this conversation and to work with other community leaders to address the systemic and deeply rooted reasons behind the inequality and injustice that haunt too many of the Black male youth who come looking for mentors. The focus of a program’s work should always be on the quality and consistency of the mentoring provided. But purposefully engaging in actions to address root causes of poverty, inequality, and injustice is also essential to the work. Mentoring is always about building up the potential of individuals to live the lives they want, but there also needs to be a recognition that those lives don’t happen in a vacuum and that mentored youth will have an easier time reaching their goals if there are efforts to improve the communities they live in. Programs should consider making it a priority to offer mentees and mentors a chance to be engaged in their community, to give back through service projects or other activities. Also, look for opportunities for your program to work with others to reduce the inequality and systemic racism that plague so many American cities.

RECOMMENDED READING AND RESOURCES

These materials can support practitioners in understanding the nuances of mentoring young Black males more effectively and in training mentors to navigate issues of race and culture.

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