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Measuring the impact of a mentoring program: preparing African American males for success beyond high school

Cornell Gray

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**MEASURING THE IMPACT OF A MENTORING PROGRAM: PREPARING
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES FOR SUCCESS BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL**

by
Cornell Alexander Gray

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Approved: Date:

Mark J. Raivetz, Ed.D.
Chair   Signature

James Coaxum III, Ph.D.
Committee Member   Signature

Reginald Davenport, Ed.D.
Committee Member   Signature

Dedication

I would first like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for giving me the strength and fortitude to endure until the end of this process. I thank the Lord for giving me such a wonderful family in the Gray's, Carmon's, Bennett's, and Sweat's, who were an integral part of my successful completion of this study. To my Godparents Thomas and Anne Adams, and my late God-sister, the Reverend Tracey Adams, thank you for supporting all of my academic endeavors and encouraging me to never cease in my efforts to further my education. Thank you to my Great Uncle Graeme and Aunt Harriett who lost their two sons much too early in life, but transferred their unconditional love and support onto me. To "Grandma Taylor," thank you for investing in my research by cutting articles out of newspapers, magazines, and other sources to help me stay informed about my topic. To my sister Jessica, thank you for always loving me and for sharing in my accomplishments. To my parents Cornell and Yvonne Gray, thank you for always believing in me even when I had no idea in what direction I was headed, for being my first examples of academic achievement, and by always reminding me that since you both earned your master's degrees, I was already predestined to earn my doctorate. To Bryce and Arden, thank you for always loving and praying for daddy when I was out studying late at night and on the weekends; you both have been blessed with exceptional intelligence and will one day reach even greater accomplishments than I. To my loving wife Andrea, you truly are my "Superwoman" and there is absolutely no way I would have made it without you by my side keeping me encouraged, and keeping our family going strong… I love you!

Abstract

Cornell Alexander Gray
MEASURING THE IMPACT OF A MENTORING PROGRAM: PREPARING
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Mark J. Raivetz, Ed.D.
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

The academic struggles befalling countless African American male youth have been the source of consternation in many homes, schools, and communities across America. When compared to males from other ethnic groups, as well as females, Black males often lag behind in many academic categories from elementary school through college. As a result of their educational failures, parents, educators, and even government officials have been exploring ways to resolve this dilemma. While a number of solutions have been proposed and even implemented by a variety of stakeholders, too few seem to offer reasonable rates of success to address what appears to be a growing problem among this at-risk Black male youth population.

This study examined the impact of mentoring on academic improvement and college preparation for African American teenage males participating in an organized mentoring program. Young men who took part in the New Brunswick (NJ) Kappa League mentoring program, as well as their parents, were the focus of the study. Utilizing quantitative and qualitative measures, the study evaluated the Kappa League's success in positively impacting student academic performance while in high school, as well as the ability to help students pursue college as an after-high school option. The study found mentoring to be a viable alternative to combat some of the struggles Black males face during their high school years and when making the transition into the college arena.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

Barack Obama is regarded as the first U.S. President of African American descent. Despite reaching such an unprecedented accomplishment, his high levels of educational achievement, economic attainment, and governmental power can still be considered somewhat of an unrealistic and inaccessible goal for many Black youth in this country, especially Black boys. Problems related to disruptive classroom behavior, threats to academic progress, and learning difficulties are some of the factors thought to have broad consequences for the future educational attainment and employment opportunities of Black males (Gavazzi, Russell, & Khurana, 2009).

According to various studies on educational achievement, socioeconomic status, and data from the U.S. justice system, African Americans, males in particular, often produce the most negative outcomes when compared to females (of all ethnic groups), and their White and Asian male counterparts. Often burdened with the problem of racism, socioeconomic challenges, and various forms of oppression, Black males tend to be more susceptible to criminal acts, substance abuse, and early sexual behavior in addition to their academic struggles (Wyatt, 2009). As a result, they lag behind in most major categories typically used to measure present and future success, and lead the way in those behaviors that are most inhibiting and destructive. However with the support of Black men serving in the capacity of mentors, who have proven there are ways to overcome these very obstacles, the futures of many Black male youth can be much brighter and they will not have to succumb to the negative pressures often confronting them.

Numerous studies reveal the chronic struggles Black male and female students face when attempting to successfully navigate America's school systems in pursuit of college. These challenges befalling African American children and youth are well documented, and are chronicled in a variety of ways. According to Whiting (2009) "Black males are over-represented in special education, under-represented in gifted education, over-represented among students who are underachievers, and over-represented among students who are unmotivated and choose to disengage academically (p. 224)." For instance, nationally, White males are as much as 4 times as likely as Black males to take Advanced Placement courses in math and science and more than 2 times as likely as Black male students to be placed in gifted programs in school (Schott Foundation, 2010). While Black males account for about 9% of school district enrollment nationally, they comprise only 3.54% of students in gifted programs (Whiting, 2006). Conversely, while they are grossly underrepresented in gifted programs, Black males are more than two times as likely as White male students to be classified as mentally retarded (Schott Foundation, 2010). According to Martin (2007), Black males consistently perform lowest academically; have the poorest rates of attendance; have the highest dropout, suspension, and expulsion rates; and most often fail to complete high school or even earn a GED.

The degree to which students are actively engaged in the learning process, often referred to as "school preparedness," is one of the factors the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics uses to measure potential academic achievement and to support the previous findings. According to the U.S. Department of Education's (2007) most recent data in this area, Black students come to school without books, without basic supplies (paper, pens, pencils), and without homework more often than their White and Asian peers. More specifically, 23.4% of Black students came to school without books (compared to 12.5% of Whites and

18.9% of Asian/Pacific Islanders); 22.5% came to school without paper, pens or pencils (13.8%

of Whites and 18.4% of Asian/Pacific Islanders); and 28.6% came to school without homework

(22.7% of Whites and 26.3% of Asian/Pacific Islanders) (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Being disengaged from the learning process will inevitably keep Black youth, including a large

portion of Black male youth, lagging behind other groups and in need of academic remediation

and support.

Behaviorally (like academically), Black males tend to exhibit more problems than their

counterparts both in and out of the school setting. Black students are as much as 30-50% more

likely to experience difficulties resulting in time spent in the principal's office and are 3 to 5

times more likely to face suspension or expulsion from school (Gavazzi, et al., 2009). The Schott

Foundation (2010) reported Black male students are more than 2 times as likely as White male

students to receive out of school suspensions, and be expelled. More specifically, while Black

males only make up about 17% of students in America's public schools, they account for 32% of

suspended students (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008).

In addition to school-related infractions, Black males have high incidents of deviant

behavior that often lead to law enforcement intervention. While Blacks only make up about 13%

of the total U.S. population, they accounted for 15% of victims of nonfatal violent crimes and

almost half of all homicides (Harrell, 2007). Also according to Harrell (2007), the victims of

violent crimes more often than not were Black males, and young (between the ages of 17-29),

while a vast majority of the perpetrators were also young Black males.

In addition to the information on crime and other deviant behavior, Mitchell, Bush, and

Bush (2002) noted that Black teenage males are among the highest percentage of youth residing

in single parent households, and in most instances, the mother is the primary parent in these situations. According to Planty, Hussar, Snyder, Provasnik, Kena, Dinkes, KewalRamani, and Kemp (2008), only 35% of Black school-aged children lived in two-parent households (compared to 75% of Whites and 65% of Hispanics). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2007), 5 of every 6 or about 83.8% of Black family single-parent households are headed by the mother. Additionally, Planty et al. (2008) noted that 33% of Black children in the same age range live below the poverty line as opposed to 10% of Whites and 26% of Hispanics, further supporting the notion that young Black males and their families are in need of support to help increase the chances of success.

Adults who enroll in college immediately following high school are typically between the ages of 18-24. This age range also represents a large number of males in this country who are incarcerated, the largest percentage being African American males. According to Bonczar (2003), 8.5% of Black males ages 18-24 are incarcerated, compared to 4% of Hispanic males and 1.1% of White males of the same ages. While African Americans make up only 15% of youth in America, they account for about 25% of all juvenile arrests and nearly 40% of youth in juvenile detention facilities (Gavazzi et al., 2009). Furthermore, with 80% of the juvenile delinquent population made up of males, a vast majority of those Black youths being arrested and in detention centers are African American boys (Gavazzi et al., 2009).

Impetus for the Study

As an undergraduate student at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (a historically Black college) I first generated a passion for working with young men and helping this population make positive strides, particularly in the area of educational advancement. While being on a campus of primarily African American students, I noticed firsthand the stark disparity that existed between the vast amount of Black female students, and the more modest number of Black males on campus. After being elected "Mr. A&T" (the North Carolina A&T State University campus king) at the end of my sophomore year, I was given the task of promoting a positive initiative among my campus peers. My immediate thought centered on helping young school-age males in the Greensboro, NC community that surrounded the university. As a result, I founded the Aggie M.E.N. (Motivators, Educators, and Nurturers) mentoring program, and connected my male college peers with young men from a local middle school to mentor throughout the school year.

Leading my first mentoring endeavor was not sparked by quantitative research or national statistics, but through more qualitative measures of seeing young Black males continuing to make negative choices in life, or simply not living up to their potential. This was the case with many of my Black male peers with whom I attended high school. Much of my interest simply arose as a result of my experiences growing up in a middle-class suburban community.

Other interest stemmed from my daily observations and interactions on a college campus where almost two-thirds of the students were female, and with that number seeming to increase during each of my years on campus. While personally, I was afforded an overwhelming amount of support from my parents as well as many others during my time as an African American

teenager and college student, too many of today's Black males are forced to go without such valuable guidance. It is often this lack of support and limited number of positive role models in their schools and communities that is attributed to today's young African-American males often being labeled "endangered" and not performing well in high school. The results of poor high school performance limit the numbers of Black males who might continue their education and pursue college.

As a master's student at the University of Michigan, I completed my fieldwork in inner-city Detroit, a city with a sizeable population of African Americans. I chose to venture away from suburban Ann Arbor to work in Detroit to gain experience interacting with urban youths, particularly urban Black male youth. The moments I spent in the communities making home visits, consulting with community agencies, and conducting observations in a variety of public high schools was enlightening, eye-opening, and oftentimes disheartening. Most of the time I spent throughout Detroit, I was assigned to case manage African American high school males who were facing a series of challenges. I served as an advisor and role model to them and I basically considered myself somewhat of a "big brother" and mentor to the young men, even though the relationship was temporary (only a few months). Despite my limited exposure to the youth I interacted with in Detroit, the events were memorable and extremely beneficial in helping me frame my life's work and ultimate career focus. Based largely on those experiences in Detroit following my fieldwork (coupled with my mentoring background in North Carolina), I realized I had an affinity for helping young African American males in a more consistent and lasting way.

Beginning in my undergraduate years, continuing into my master's coursework, and now doctoral studies, my research interests have primarily centered on the same topic: supporting the growth and academic development of African American teenage males. Working as an educator all of my professional career, I have been able to encourage learning for young people of all backgrounds, yet, my personal pursuits (particularly outside of my daily work responsibilities) still focus on African American teenage males. Regardless of where my personal and educational experiences have taken me, I have observed that Black boys, more than any other group, seem to be in need of special attention, support, and encouragement to be successful academically, and to reach the positive goals they establish for themselves. In direct response to these needs, I learned how to apply my years of personal experiences and professional knowledge to the development and advancement of Black males through the establishment of a monthly mentoring program.

For the past 5 years, with the support of members of my fraternity, the New Brunswick Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., I have led the charge of helping middle and high school age young men gain the skills and interests necessary to help them in the following ways: to improve their behavior, make positive choices in their homes, schools, and communities; and realize the need to interact appropriately with their peers, parents, teachers, and other adults. However among the most valuable lessons we try to instill upon the young men relates to education. We strive to help each young man understand the benefits of academic achievement, commit themselves to pursuing the highest academic standards during their middle and high school years, and to actively pursue a college education leading up to them earning a degree.

Purpose of the Study

Based on experiences with young men who participated in the New Brunswick Alumni (NBA) Kappa League mentoring program, this study will focus on identifying the benefits and the overall value that lie in youth mentoring initiatives, particularly those geared towards African American teenage males. The purpose of the study is to help identify some of the broader benefits structured mentoring initiatives can have on African American high school males, with an emphasis on those benefits that can be connected specifically to their educational improvement and college enrollment. Additionally, this study is designed to determine if mentoring can be used as an effective strategy for helping African American teenage males succeed throughout high school and reach graduation. The research study will also measure the degree in which consistent and effective mentoring can serve as a means of giving Black males information about college, increasing their interest in applying and attending, supporting them in the application process, and ensuring they have the skills necessary to make a positive transition from high school to the college campus.

The degree to which the New Brunswick Kappa League mentoring program has been effective in specifically helping the high school junior and senior participants is another major focus and will be assessed in this study. While young men are accepted into the Kappa League program as early as the seventh grade, special activities have been instituted for participants during their junior and seniors years of high school to encourage them to pursue college after graduation, and to assist them in their college application process. These activities were geared toward helping them finish their high school years as positively as possible concerning their grades, extracurricular and leadership activities, and in their college preparation plans. The

effectiveness of these activities will be gauged and the impact they have made on the high school juniors and seniors and their parents will be uncovered.

Although the main subjects of the study are those NBA Kappa League members who graduated high school and are no longer in the program, their participation will help determine the course of future NBA Kappa League members. Feedback taken from the Kappa League participants who graduated high school in 2010 and went on to college will be used to further assess the program's impact. More specifically, it will help determine if the program was instrumental in preparing them for some of the challenges they may have faced during their initial time in college and if it helped them make a positive transition onto their respective college campuses. This data will be used for the purpose of generating second order change by using their feedback and recommendations to implement any necessary changes to improve the college preparation activities (as well as other aspects of the program) conducted with future young men in the NBA Kappa League.

Research Questions

Based on the information provided about the dismal state of young Black males outlined in the problem statement and purpose, this study will seek to answer the following questions about mentoring the African-American teenage males in the NBA Kappa League program:

1. *In what ways can participation in the New Brunswick Alumni Kappa League mentoring program benefit African American teenage males during their high school years?*

2. *How might participation the New Brunswick Alumni Kappa League mentoring program influence African American teenage males to pursue and apply to college?*

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3. *How does the college preparation support the African American teenage males receive through the New Brunswick Alumni Kappa League mentoring program compare to the college preparation assistance they receive from their high school?*

4. *How can I manage my leadership practice to structure the Kappa League program to best serve the educational needs of the participants during their high school years?*

Significance of the Study

Black adolescent males and their immediate family members should benefit significantly from this study. All too often, the reported problems that befall Black male youth are reported with regard to the negative impact and burden their behavior and shortcomings have on their schools and communities. However, when Black male youth fail academically, commit crimes, engage in deviant behavior and the like, they most significantly destroy their own lives, and the lives of their families.

Each goal articulated in this study is designed to generate information to continue to improve the work that is done with the young men of the NBA Kappa League and to help best prepare them to maximize their potential and to strive for present and future achievements. As a result, this study is expected to be of value to the Black young men who participate as well as to their families. When completed, the feedback should help to enhance the program's focus and offer firsthand advice on ways to create even more opportunities for the current and future young men who will be graduating high school and moving on to college.

Consequently, many Black male youth lack the consistent presence of a father, and as a result, often lack a steady relationship with any positive adult male role model. In such instances,

it is necessary for other positive men to serve as examples to them and to help take an active role in their growth and development as a young man. If the results of this research study help reveal the benefits of mentoring Black males (with one of the benefits being to help them establish positive male role models), parents and Black families will be impacted by this research study.

Schools where Black male teens are enrolled will be impacted as well by this research study. As previously noted, many reports concerning Black male achievement tend to be bleak. In addition to Black male teenagers lagging far behind students of other subgroups with regard to high school statistics, particularly graduation rates, a number of studies support the idea that African American males are less likely to attend college, both 4-year and 2-year. In a 6-year longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of approximately 25,000 eighth-grade students, Thomas (1998) showed that for Black students, regardless of gender, who enrolled in a 4-year or 2-year college or university right after high school there were notable disparities between their degree of enrollment and those of other races whose enrollment numbers were higher. When only analyzing students by race, for Black students, Thomas (1998) went on to add that Black females were 62% more likely to attend 4-year colleges than Black males, and 58% were more likely to attend 2-year colleges.

With such despairing information about the state of Black males in America's schools, there seems to be a tremendous need for support from outside of the school structure to help rectify these problems. Mentoring may be one way to address the issue. Loeser (2008) compared groups of students in mentoring programs, to those students not receiving any form of mentoring and his findings showed that the students receiving mentoring attended school more consistently, and earned better grades than the group of students without mentors. Seeking to determine

whether or not mentoring initiatives can be considered a viable option to address many of the academic problems Black males face is an important study that may offer some hope and much needed assistance to educators and systems looking for ways to target their Black male population for improvement. With the number of studies indicating the poor success rates for young Black males, mentoring may help to improve the overall educational state of these youth.

Depending on the results of this study, there may be similar evidence to support the connection between mentoring and academic improvement. If this becomes apparent in this research project, this study will have an impact on schools with young Black males who are underachieving both academically and behaviorally. Like parents, schools across the country serving populations of Black male youth are looking for answers to increase the levels of achievement, increase standardized test scores, and bolster graduation rates of their Black males, and to help greater numbers of them enroll in colleges. If mentoring can be a proven method to help address the various problems facing Black male youth, especially with regard to academics, schools might begin to advocate for such initiatives, or be willing to work more closely with community organizations that have a desire to collaborate with them on mentoring programs and other related endeavors to support Black males.

Finally, this study on the benefits of mentoring Black male can also be significant to communities where they reside, or spend their time by addressing issues of safety, crime, and other behaviors that have negative implications for Black males and those around them. Mitchell et al. (2002) revealed that Black males, particularly during the adolescent and teenage years, have among the highest rates of death due to homicide and disproportionate numbers of these young men enter jail or juvenile detention centers. Additionally, suicide among Black males is

steadily increasing, and they are at the greatest risk of witnessing and being a victim of violent acts (Gavazzi et al., 2009). While Black male youth are sometimes associated with having at least one factor placing them at risk, far too often they possess more than one of these at-risk characteristics. They have even been known to join gangs, and other negative peer groups to make up for positive relationships they are missing out on, especially due to the lack of fathers or father figures in their lives. While such relationships often satisfy a need for acceptance and support, these options place them further at risk, as well as create unsafe conditions in the communities where these young men reside.

Since this research study is focused on ways to support African American males through identifying and sharing successful characteristics of mentoring initiatives, this study is important to Black male youth who may be the recipients of other similar mentoring programs outside of Kappa League. Although other mentoring programs may differ slightly, they may be able to utilize the results of this study to help revise their initiatives to help their young men to also find greater success. Whether in Kappa League or not, far too many young Black males are facing an inordinate amount of challenges, many that their peers from other ethnic groups are not dealing with to the same degree. Religious, civic, and other community organizations can find hope through this study that mentoring initiatives, regardless of the size, can have help redirect young Black males, and help them become responsible citizens instead of becoming threats to society.

Conclusion

Black teenage males face a variety of academic and behavioral challenges during their high school years and even as they strive to move on to the college level. The mentoring initiatives of the Kappa League program may not serve as a panacea for all of the struggles this

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population faces, but enough efforts have been made to determine if the young men who have taken part in the program are any better off as a result of their participation. More detailed information will be shared about the struggles Black male youth encounter to help make a case for the need to shift attention to the needs of this group. Additionally, data about the benefits of mentoring will be incorporated and suggested as a viable option to help lead young Black males in a more positive direction.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

African-American Male Achievement

One major issue that continues to plague America's educational reformers is the underachievement of students of color, namely African Americans. Despite being the focus of national, as well as numerous state and local initiatives, the achievement gap between students of color (mainly Black and Hispanic) and their White and Asian peers continues to create questions about the strength of our nation's public school educational system. The achievement gap typically refers to the discrepancy in academic achievement between different ethnic or socioeconomic groups (Alexander, 2009). Subgroups can be based on a variety of factors such as gender and geographic location, among others; however, the disparities due to race are often at the forefront of discussion and research.

When analyzing the achievement of African-American students, the disparity between their achievement levels and those of other subgroups is glaring. According to a study by the National Center for Educational Progress (NAEP) comparing reading testing data from the 1990 to 2009 scale scores of fourth and eighth graders, Black students trailed Asian, White, and Hispanic males and females in virtually every category (Hispanics only by about 1% on average). In 2009, 16% of Black fourth grade students were at the Proficient Level in reading and 2% were at the Advanced Level compared to Asians who had 49% of students at the Proficient Level and 16% at the Advanced Level, and Whites with 42% of proficient students and 10% of advanced students (Aud et al., 2010).

In grade 8, only 14% of Blacks were at the Proficient Level in reading compared to 45% of Asians, and 42% of Whites (Aud et al., 2010). The Advanced Level eighth grade reading scores for Blacks rounded to 0 while 6% of Asians and 4% of Whites were at that level (Aud et al., 2010). For Black male grade students specifically, the results were even worse. Nationally, only 9% of Black males in the eighth grade scored at the Proficient Level compared to 33% of White males (a 24% gap), while in New Jersey, 15% of Black males scored at that level compared to 44% of White males (a 29% gap) (Schott, 2010).

Like the reading scores, Black students performed the lowest among all subgroups on the NAEP mathematics assessment. While the margin was slightly greater between Black and Hispanics at the Proficient Level compared to the reading results, it was comparable at the Advanced Level. Based on the fourth grade mathematics test results, significant achievement gaps at the Proficient Level between Blacks and Asians, Blacks and Whites, and Blacks and Hispanics were evident with the following percentages of each group scoring in that range: Blacks 16%, Asians 60%, Whites 51%, and Hispanics 22% (Aud et al., 2010). At the fourth grade mathematics Advanced Level, there were only 1% of Black students scoring in that range compared to 17% of Asians and 8% of Whites (Aud et al., 2010).

The eighth grade test results for all groups were similar to the fourth grade results with percentages at the Proficient Level being the highest for Asians and the lowest for Blacks. While only 12% of Black students scored at the Proficient Level, 54% of Asians, 44% of Whites, and 17% of Hispanics did so (Aud et al., 2010). A consistent disparity was evident at the Advanced Level as well as a mere 1% of Blacks and Hispanics placed in that category versus 19% of Asians and 11% of Whites (Aud et al., 2010).

In addition to the fourth and eighth grade NAEP scores, results for African American students at the end of their secondary years of education were also deficient, as 12th-grade students in both reading and math were also low. When analyzed by race/ethnicity, Black students had the lowest 2009 NAEP scale scores among all groups. In reading, Black students' average score was 269 compared to 298 for Asian/Pacific Islanders, 296 for Whites, and 274 for Hispanics (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The reading gap between Black and Asian/Pacific Islanders was 29 points and it was 27 points between Blacks and Whites. Not much different than reading, the 12-grade math NEAP average scale score for Black students was at a low of 131, and the gap between Asians and Whites was even greater (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). With Asian/Pacific Islanders scoring 175 and Whites scoring 161, the Black and Asian/Pacific Islander gap was 44 points and the Black and White gap was 30 points (US Department of Education, 2009).

In addition to NAEP assessments, enrollment in algebra by the eighth grade is another method the U.S. Department of Education uses to measure academic success and consequently uncovered more racial disparities in achievement. Algebra completion by grade eight is often an indicator of a student's degree of high school math success and has been reported to help increase one's chances of acceptance into a 4-year college. Bovick and Ingles (2008) argued that when students are given an equal chance to take rigorous courses like algebra (in the eighth grade), the achievement gap will decrease significantly and standardized tests and other assessments will reflect less of a disparity between races. However, according to Walston and McCarrol (2010), only 19% of Black eighth grade students are enrolled in an algebra course (or a higher math class) compared to 67% of Asians, 45% of Whites, and 38% of Hispanics.

Even when Black students score as well as their counterparts in elementary school math, it has been shown that they are still less likely to be placed in algebra by the eighth grade, reducing their chances of achieving academic equity. While 62% of high achieving fifth grade math students end up in algebra by the eighth grade, only 35% of those high achieving Black students are placed in algebra compared to 94% of Asians, 68% of Hispanics, and 64% of Whites (Walston & McCarrol, 2010). Not only is the gap significantly wide between African American students and other subgroups, but with more Black females enrolled in algebra, the gap is even more pronounced for African American males.

In categories related to school behavior, Black youth continue to produce disturbing outcomes when measured against youth of other subgroups, particularly when it comes to infractions that result in time out of school. The suspension and expulsion rates are two examples of behavioral factors that often hinder the academic progress of Black youth. Although overall school discipline rates decreased for most subgroups between 1991 and 2005, they actually increased for Black students over that same period (Wallace et al.,2008). Between 1973 and 2006, the suspension rate among Black middle school students increased nine points, increasing the suspension gap for Blacks and White students from three to 10 percentage points in those 3 decades (Losen & Skiba, 2006). Losen and Skiba's (2006) report also highlighted that 175 urban school districts across the country suspend at least 33% of their Black male population compared to only 53 districts for White males and 43 districts for Hispanic males. Thus, further evidence of the stark disparity in how Black male students are perceived and treated compared to males of other groups.

Black students (regardless of age range) have been reported as being suspended as much as 2 to 3 times more than other subgroups (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Similarly, Wallace et al. (2008) found that Black males at a rate of approximately 56% were 2 to 5 times more likely to be both suspended and expelled than their male counterparts from other subgroups who were only suspended from 19% to 43%. Unfortunately the extensive amounts of time Black males miss school impact their academics and in addition to underperforming, reports indicate that suspended students feel less connected to their school, tend to be less invested, and lack motivation to achieve (Gregory, et al., 2010).

Retention rates, like suspensions and expulsions, are disproportionately affecting Black males as well. Wood, Kaplan, and McLoyd (2007) when discussing gender differences, highlighted that African American boys fare worse than females and are more likely to have academic difficulties, be placed in special education, experience school suspension, and be retained. While the overall rate of retention for youth between the ages of 16-19 decreased for all ethnic groups between 1995 and 2004, Blacks who were retained still outnumbered Whites and Hispanics (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2006) study on grade retention, 16.1% of Black youth were retained compared to 8.1% of Whites, and 9.2% of Hispanics. Since the retention rates of males were reported to double that of females, when analyzed by race and gender combined, Black males are responsible for a vast majority of the retentions.

Student retention has also been identified as a school factor influencing youth who drop out of school. Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2007) found that as early as middle school, strong relationships exist between retention in grade and a student's decision to drop out. According to

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McCallumore and Sparapani (2010), in cities with the highest dropout rates, up to 40% of students repeat the ninth grade, of which only 10%-15% go on to graduate. In both middle and high school, low rates of academic achievement, student failure in particular, lead to disengagement from school which is a strong predictor of dropping out (Balfanz, Herzog, & Mac Iver, 2007).

Studies reveal that Black male students resort to dropping out of school at a greater degree than many other subgroups. According to Jordan and Cooper (2002), when compared to other groups, Black males typically top most school categories that are negative such as dropout rates, along with others such as suspension, expulsion, absenteeism, and low standardized test scores. In a U.S. Department of Education report, Aud et al., (2010) found that Black students (male and female) dropped out of school at a rate of 11%, compared to Whites at 6% and Asians at 3%. When examined by race and gender, Black males dropped out at a rate of 12%, higher than Black females and Whites and Asians of both genders (Aud et al., 2010). To further articulate how the dropout problem impacts Black teenagers, the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (2007) reported that 11% of Black youth ages 16-19 were neither enrolled in school nor working compared to only 6% of White and Asian youth in the same age range.

The results of high retention and dropout rates among Black males have adversely affected graduation rates. According to Greene and Winters (2006), only about 55% of Black males and females nationally graduate high school which is slightly higher than Hispanic males and females at 53%, but significantly lower than Whites (about 78%) and Asians (about 72%). When separating the data by race and gender, Black males have the lowest high school

graduation rate among all ethnic and gender groups. When analyzing Black males separate from Black females, the high school graduation problem facing the Black male population becomes even more glaring as it has been reported that nationally only about 47% of Black males earn their diplomas compared to 78% of White males (Schott Foundation, 2010).

When looking more closely at national Black male graduation rates, the Schott Foundation conducted a state by state comparison to determine if any trends exist to help understand why Black male graduation rates are below 50%. Their results indicated that 70% of states across the country have Black male graduation rates of 59% or lower. More specifically, a total of 20 states (as well as the District of Columbia) have below 50% graduation rates for Black male students, 15 states have Black male graduation rates between 50% and 59%, seven states graduate between 60% and 69% of Black males (one being New Jersey at 69%), and only eight states graduate over 70% of their Black male high school students (Schott Foundation, 2010). Although New Jersey has the ninth highest rate of graduating Black males at 69%, they still have a sizeable graduation gap since White males in the state graduate at a rate of 90%, the third highest rate in the nation (Schott Foundation, 2010). However, even with the 21% gap, New Jersey is still the only sate graduating over 65% of their Black males while having what is considered a significant Black male enrollment (Schott Foundation, 2010).

African-American Males and College

Just as Black males have faced challenges successfully graduating high school at the same rates as their counterparts, disparities also exist among Black males enrolling and successfully completing college. In fact, the high school graduation rate almost mirrors the college enrollment rate for Black males. From 1972-2008 the percentage of high school

graduates who immediately enrolled in college increased for all ethnic groups, however the gap between Black and Whites was still significant. While the rate of college enrollment immediately after high school for Black students (male and female) was 56%, it was 72% for Whites and 64% for Hispanics (Aud et al., 2008).

According to Roach (2007), Black men comprised only 4.3 % of all students enrolled at American institutions of higher education in 2003, the exact same percentage as in 1976. His study showed that over almost a 30-year period, there has been virtually no increase in the percent of Black males entering college. The rate that students enter college each year is an important indicator used to measure the total number as well as the characteristics of the students attending America's colleges and universities. When compared to other groups by gender and ethnicity, Black males tend to have among the poorest rates of college enrollment.

To analyze the numbers even more closely, Mather and Adams (2007) revealed that Black males at 28% are second to last on the list of college enrollment (including graduate or professional school) only ahead of Hispanic males at a low of 21%. Looking at the data for the other males in the study, White males have a 39% college enrollment rate and Asian/Pacific Islander males top all groups (male and female) at 62% (Mather & Adams, 2007). Other than the Asian/Pacific Islander population, females in all other ethnic groups topped the males. When comparing Black males and Black females, Black females tend to enroll at about a 10% higher rate than Black males.

Like college enrollment rates, Black males who do graduate high school and elect to continue their education post discouraging numbers with regards to their ability to find success in college and earn a degree. While high school graduation rates are inferior compared to other

groups, the college graduation rates for Black males are even more disheartening. According to

The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2006) the college graduation rate of all Black

students is only 43%, and for Black males it is only about 36%. This 36% low is even considered

an improvement from the previous number of 28% 16 years earlier (The Journal of Blacks in

Higher Education, 2006). According to Schmidt (2008), of the students enrolled in America's 4-

year colleges and universities, approximately 70% of Black male freshmen never complete their

degree after 6 years. Not only do limited numbers of Black males enroll in college after high

school, but too few are making it past their freshman year almost making them no different than

their peers who never pursued college at all.

College, like high school graduation rates seem to be tremendously low for masses of

Black males in America and like other areas, are in dire need of improvement. Unfortunately, of

the total number of Black males who annually enroll in American colleges and universities, less

than about 10% enroll at colleges who graduate 70% or more of their Black students (Schmidt,

2008). Additionally, the majority of Black males who attend college go to institutions graduating

less than 40% of their Black students over a 6-year period (Schmidt, 2008). Even if college

enrollment numbers for Black males start to improve, if they cannot manage to remain long

enough to complete their degree and continue to find minimal levels of success, then their

condition in society will not begin to turn around for the positive.

<center>**African American Males at-Risk**</center>

When Black males struggle academically, are suspended and expelled at disproportionate

rates, drop out of high school, fail to enroll in college, and when enrolled in college fail to earn a

degree, problematic circumstances often ensue. Gavazzi et al. (2009) argued that poor academic

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achievement and behavioral challenges in school are factors that can lead to delinquency in

Black males, and as a result make them twice as likely to engage in antisocial behavior compared

to their peers who find greater academic success. Young Black males are often the largest

population of victims of violent crimes, and those who are arrested and eventually serve time in

prison for perpetrating criminal acts.

While Black males are at the bottom end of the college enrollment and graduation rates,

they top the percentages of Americans involved in situations of violence whether from the

standpoint of the victim or aggressor. According to Truman and Rand (2009), more violent crime

victims are male, Black, and under the age of 24 as opposed to those who are female, White and

over the age of 25. Blacks in the typical high school and college age ranges lead the violent

victimization rates compared to older Blacks (over the age of 25). Black youth ages 12-15 have a

violent victimization rate of 46.5%, with 71.9% for ages 16-19, and 51.4% for ages 20-24

(Harrell, 2007). When analyzed more closely, in 2005 Black males accounted for 52% of all

male homicide victims; 36% were between the ages of 13 and 24, and 51% were between the

ages of 17 and 29 (Harrell, 2007). In addition to homicide, Black males were more likely than

Whites to experience overall acts of nonfatal violence, including robbery, aggravated assault, as

well as simple assault. Additionally, with 78% of the crimes against Blacks committed by

members of their own race, along with leading in victimization, a vast majority of the crimes are

also being committed by Black youth (Black males) as well (Harrell, 2007).

In addition to victimization, Black males also lead the other groups in rates of

incarceration. According to Bonczar (2003) about one in three (or roughly 32.2%) Black males

are in danger of facing incarceration at some point in their lifetime compared to one in six

(17.2%) Hispanic males, and one in seventeen (5.9%) of White males (the average rate is only

6.6% for all U.S. citizens combined). When analyzed by race, gender, and age, Black males in

their late teens through their 20's are sentenced to prison more than any other group. At the start

of 2006, Black males ages 18-19 accounted for 11,800 inmates, while White males accounted for

a little more than one half that number with 7,200 inmates and Hispanic males accounting for

almost exactly one half with 5,600 inmates (Harrison & Beck, 2006).

In the same year, Black males made up about 8.1% of all inmates between the ages of 25-

29, compared to only 2.6% of Hispanic males and 1.1% of White males (Harrison & Beck,

2006). Even when the age range is extended, the rate of Black male incarceration continues to be

alarming with half of all urban Black males between the ages of 18-35 reported to be a part of

the penal system (Gavazzi et al., 2009). By far, Black males particularly in their late high school

years, and into the age range of the average college student, commit crimes and are incarcerated

at disproportionate rates compared to their Hispanic and White counterparts. Although Black

youth are not listed to a large extent in the college enrollment and graduation statistics, they are

indeed being accounted for; they are just showing up in a different type of study.

Mentoring

Mentoring is referenced in Homer's "The Odyssey" written around 700 B.C. through the

character "Mentor" who was a friend of Odysseus (Dappen & Iserhagen, 2005). According to

Dappen and Iserhagen's account, when Odysseus went to fight in the Trojan War, he entrusted

Mentor to look after his son Telemachus and to protect him as he grew and developed into

manhood. While Mentor is described in such a way, and was given such a charge, it has been

argued that he did not adequately fulfill that role and failed to epitomize later definitions of what the term mentor has come to signify.

Mentoring in the United States has been traced to the late 1800s to a program called Friendly Visiting. According to Guetzloe (1997), the program was established to match middle-class adults with poor children and youth to provide them with role models; however it did not last long, and ended in the beginning of the twentieth century. Despite the formal program diminishing, aspects of the Friendly Visitors model still existed in certain parts of the country well into the 1960s and 1970s (Townsel, 1997). According to Townsel (1997), the basic model still involved White middle-class and upper middle-class adults going into poor urban areas to help serve as a positive example to the children (usually minority).

In 1904, the Men's Club of the Central Presbyterian Church of New York recognized the need to help youth in their community, and started what is now known as the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) organization. BBBSA traditionally has been a community-based mentoring program where adults are matched with youth of the same gender, on a one-on-one basis. BBBSA is still recognized as one of the largest and longest running mentoring organizations in America, with nearly 500 agencies serving millions of children across all 50 states (Cutshall, 2001). BBBSA continues to be a model for other community youth mentoring programs, and a number of mentoring researchers make reference to the organization in their work.

Mentoring Defined

The concept of mentoring has been defined, interpreted, and implemented in a variety of ways, and in one of its most basic forms can describe the relationship in which someone offers

assistance or advice to someone else. The person offering the assistance is usually referred to as the mentor and the one who is the recipient of the support is sometimes considered the mentee or protégé. Loeser (2008) defined mentoring as a situation arranged by a community organization, business, or school where two individuals agree to meet one-on-one on a regular basis. Age is often included in mentoring definitions, and in one such case has been described as the pairing of a younger person (mentee) with an older more experienced person (mentor) with the expectation that the dyad will develop into a relationship where the mentor will support and guide the mentee (Thomson & Zand, 2010). Goldner and Mayseless (2009) also emphasized the dyadic characteristic of mentoring and explained it as the relationship between nonprofessional and nonparental adults and their protégés.

Mentoring relationships are practiced in various facets of American society including corporations, government, colleges and universities, communities, and schools. In each relationship, the mentor is encouraged and sometimes required to pass information on to the mentee and the information varies based on the situation and nature of the mentoring relationship. Mentors have also been known to share specific skills, habits, practices, or behaviors with their mentees. According to Dondero (1997), a mentor listens to, cares for, advises, and shares information about life, careers, and other experiences with another, usually a younger person who requires their assistance.

Many mentors are volunteers who engage in mentoring simply because they have a desire to help others. In other circumstances, mentors are motivated to serve in that capacity to receive compensation in exchange for services they provide. In both cases, mentoring is important and necessary for some people to learn, develop, and improve personally, educationally, or

professionally. The instances where mentors are compensated for their time and service often occur in professional or business settings. This is reflected in an article by LaVant, Anderson, and Tiggs (1997) where they explained mentoring as "a form of professional socialization wherein a more experienced individual acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and patron of a less experienced protégé" (p. 43).

Types of Mentoring

Adult-to-adult or peer-to-peer are two widely practiced forms of volunteer mentoring, however adult-to-youth is one of the most popular mentoring structures. This traditional style of mentoring is practiced by BBBSA, and many other mentoring programs serving youth throughout America. Often referred to as youth mentoring, this applies to situations where adults are formally assigned to serve as mentors to adolescents and teens. According to Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, and Dubois (2008), youth mentoring involves a relationship between a caring, supportive adult and a child or adolescent. Struchen and Porta (1997) characterized it as an arrangement where an adult agrees to serve as a role model to a youth or group of young people, and teach them values. They also added that the mentor is usually an experienced adult with a desire to help instill positive characteristics into young people which can be accomplished when mentors share personal experiences, provide instruction, offer encouragement, and engage in various activities (Struchen & Porta, 1997).

Adult-to-youth mentoring programs are sometimes designed solely for youth who are labeled "at risk." At-risk youth are associated with being in need of special attention and support often as a result having negative life experiences, making poor choices, or experiencing lack of time spent with other adults. At risk can refer to a number of characteristics including youth who

are economically disadvantaged, exhibiting academic or behavioral problems in school, engaging in behaviors such as alcohol or drug use, or dealing with teenage pregnancy. Loeser (2008) suggested that youth mentoring programs in most instances are created for the at-risk child and those youth who may be abused or neglected, a parent or expecting parent, a juvenile offender, a low academic achiever, or even one who has a disability. Describing mentoring programs targeted for at-risk students, Converse and Lignugaris/Kraft (2009) defined the relationship between an adult mentor and a child as one that is essential in the fact that when a child is paired with an adult mentor there is a greater chance of a nurturing and positive outcome for the child when it comes to attaining life's goals. The belief is that these youth have value and ability, but lack the presence of positive role models to help guide them through life's challenges and help them make appropriate choices.

The hope for at-risk youth who are referred to mentoring programs is that they will acquire positive characteristics they may be lacking, or get rid of negative attributes that may be hindering them. According to Eby et al., (2008) mentoring is typically used as a way to increase desirable behavior (e.g., good grades, improved effort) and decrease undesirable behavior (e.g., dropout rate, drug use). Some mentors of at-risk youth have concluded that their efforts have indeed been effective in helping to reduce a variety of negative behaviors. When Hickman and Garvey (2006) analyzed the results of a mentoring program's impact on achievement and behavior, they found mentors reported high success rates in addressing risk factors such as drug use, self-esteem, low academic achievement, and abuse. In another study of youth deemed at risk due to behavioral problems, the group receiving intervention through mentoring demonstrated positive change in four of seven areas that were analyzed as opposed to no improvement in the group receiving no intervention (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002). The

intervention group in this study also received confirmation of positive behavioral change from their parents and teachers.

Youth mentoring programs throughout the country have typically been designed as one-on-one efforts where an adult is matched to an adolescent or teen and makes a commitment to share time engaging in conversation and other types of activities. It has been estimated that more than 4,500 organizations throughout the nation support mentoring initiatives (Dubois, Neville, Parra, & Pugh-Lilly, 2002). According to Rhodes and Dubois (2008), mentoring is one of the most popular social interventions in American society, with about 3 million U.S. youth who are engaged in formal one-on-one mentoring. While the one-on-one style is the preferred method and is most widely used, there are insufficient numbers of adults available to be matched with each youth waiting for a mentor. According to Wandersman et al., (2006) 2.5 million young people are in mentoring relationships, however, an estimated 15 million are still in need of mentors.

The lack of available mentors has encouraged mentoring agencies and program directors to explore mentoring options beyond the one-on-one format. As a result, mentoring utilizing a group format has been one of the methods used to help address the vast number of youth in need of mentors, and although the one-on-one relationship tends to be minimized in this format, this mentoring style can still be deemed effective. Struchen and Porta (1997) highlighted some of the benefits of group mentoring, and recorded that the youth involved tend to experience a sense of belonging, receive support from peers, help others by giving and receiving, and come to the understanding that they are not the only ones with problems.

Youth mentoring programs serve diverse populations, and are implemented in various ways throughout the country. Despite the variation, certain characteristics have proven to be widely effective and can increase the likelihood of mentoring success. Duration of the relationship is one important characteristic that is often mentioned in research. The ability for the mentor and youth to form a strong and lasting bond has been deemed crucial for the youth to develop positive outcomes through mentoring (Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman, & Grossman, 2005). It may seem that any time a youth spends with a mentor would be beneficial, however the extent of time a mentor commits to the youth is important. In a national report of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America program, Rhodes and Lowe (2006) found positive youth outcomes increased as the length of the mentoring relationship increased. Rhodes (2007) also found when mentors and mentees can endure through the uncomfortable situations or moments of the mentoring relationship that seem unfulfilling, the benefits of the relationship tend to be more evident. In a study of adult survivors of child abuse, the survivors that were considered "well adjusted" identified as having at least one long-term relationship with a mentor while growing up, while the adults labeled "poorly adjusted" were less likely to report having any such relationship (Southwick, Morgan, Vythlingam, & Charney, 2006).

A number of mentoring studies discuss the impact the duration of youth mentoring relationships have on the levels of reported success, and make recommendations regarding the minimum length an adult-to-youth relationship should last. A commitment of at least 1 year is favorable for mentoring youth, and in most cases and when the relationship lasts more than 12 months there is an increases in self-worth, an increase in perceived social acceptance and scholastic competence, improved parental relations, and decreases in drug and alcohol use (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). However in situations like school mentoring where students are in

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school for less than 1 year, at least 6 months of time spent together is necessary to make a measurable impact. In an analysis of a school-based program, Rhodes (2007) reported that the youth who showed the most favorable results on the measured outcomes were those youth who were in the longest mentoring relationships. In a related study of the BBBSA, Rhodes and Dubois (2008) highlighted the importance of long-term mentoring, and uncovered no notable benefits stemming from mentoring relationships lasting less than 6 months.

In addition to studies that suggest short-term mentoring may lack benefits for the youth involved, research has shown it can even serve to hurt the mentee. While youth in mentoring relationships were reported to make academic, psychological, and behavioral improvements when mentored 1 year or longer, progressively fewer positive outcomes emerged for youth mentored between 3 months to 1 year (Rhodes et al., 2005). Similarly, Southwick et al., (2006) reported that volunteer mentoring could actually have a negative impact on certain groups of at-risk children if it is done inconsistently or for only a short time period. Dubois and Rhodes (2006) stated that youth in mentoring relationships ending within the first 3 months had more reduced self-esteem than youth who received no mentoring at all. In addition to reduced self-concept, youth in mentoring relationships of less than 3 months can also exhibit declines in perceived scholastic competence (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). When studying BBBSA, Rhodes (2008) found the 9 month (or less) constraints of school-based mentoring were deemed less enduring than community-based initiatives which extended throughout the entire year. While youth mentoring is a valuable resource for at-risk youth and other youth as well, it is important for mentors to be available to make a generous time commitment to the mentee in order for their efforts to be beneficial.

While the duration of time mentors spend with their mentees is important, the consistency of time together is critical as well. If a mentoring relationship lasts a year, but the mentor and mentee meet infrequently, the relationship will likely suffer due to the lack of time spent together. Rhodes and Chan (2008) highlighted the value of mentoring over a "significant period of time," (p. 11) but also stressed for close bonds to develop, mentors and youth need to consistently spend time with one another. Consistency of contact, especially when coupled with a sizeable time commitment, often produces a successful mentoring relationship. According to Parra, DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lily, and Povinelli (2002), regular contact between mentors and mentees is essential to positive relationship outcomes.

In addition to helping to foster a positive mentoring relationship, the ability for adults to maintain regular contact with their mentees yields a number of benefits. The notion of regular contact has been indirectly connected to positive youth outcomes particularly because the time together allows for engagement in beneficial activities and bonds of support to take root (Rhodes, 2007). While some mentoring formats may not allow for consistent contact, that characteristic has been deemed essential to higher-quality mentoring relationships (Deutsch & Spencer, 2009). In a study of a branch of the BBBSA and another similar mentoring initiative Parra et al. (2002) found that mentors who are able to maintain monthly contact with their mentees had a tendency to report greater benefits for the youth with whom they were assigned. Rhodes and Lowe (2008) reported specific benefits when they found "regular contact overtime is important and can enhance the mentee's feelings of security and attachment in the mentoring and other important relationships" (p. 11).

It is the formation of the bond between the adult and youth created by the time they share with one another which helps to foster successful mentoring relationships. Other studies support the notion that frequency and consistency of contact have positive outcomes for youth and revealed that these relationships allow for emotional bonding to take place, enable trust to be established, and help youth cope with stress and other issues. Rhodes and Dubois (2008) noted the benefits of mentoring are evident only when mentors and youth are able to develop trust, empathy, and mutual respect as a result of their time spent together.

Benefits of Mentoring

Researchers have found evidence to show that youth mentoring can be both effective and ineffective but when implemented effectively, it has a number of benefits. More specifically, mentoring has been credited for helping adolescents build their self-esteem, become more resilient, and become better at solving their problems (Converse & Lignugaris/Kraft, 2009). Other benefits have included the ability for youth to cultivate a trusting relationship with an adult, to learn how to model appropriate behavior, to develop new skills and interests, and to have the opportunity to be exposed to new experiences (Loeser, 2008).

The benefits of youth mentoring have been analyzed closely especially in connection to school improvement, and the impact of the adult-to-youth relationship on school success has been the subject of many studies. Although results vary based on the program, a number of findings have indicated favorable results. Rhodes, Grossman, and Resch (2000) noted that mentors tend to enhance the outlook of students when it comes to their academic efforts, attitudes, and overall school performance. Mentoring can also increase self-esteem in youth, and students with high self-esteem often enjoy going to school and tend to perform well when they

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are there (Loeser, 2008). In a study where 54% of youth reported having a mentor, the majority

of them identified their mentoring relationship as helping them develop an overall positive

attitude toward school (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). Results from a BBBSA study of mentored youth

after an 18 month period also yielded significant differences in behavior and academic

performance of the mentored youth when compared to the control group (Rhodes, 2008).

Related to school issues, researchers have analyzed youth who exhibit excessive truancy

and those youth who are at risk of dropping out of school. When close to 1,000 adolescents were

surveyed after an 18-month period of being mentored, Rhodes et al. (2000) found that among

other positive outcomes, mentored youth showed significant improvement in their scholastic

competence as well as their school attendance. Hickman and Garvey (2006) found that youth

who are engaged in mentoring relationships only skipped school half as many times as students

in the comparison group who were not receiving mentoring support. In a study of dropout rates,

findings indicated that the students who made the decision to drop out of school expressed that

part of their decision was based upon the lack of adequate support from a caring adult presence

in their lives (Dondero, 1997). The presence of mentors can help to reduce the number of

students who are truant and who drop out of school by providing the nurturing and guidance

needed to help them make appropriate decisions and to remain in school regardless of the

challenges or problems they may experience.

In addition to school improvement, mentoring has proven to be an effective way to build

a variety of positive characteristics in youth that directly impact their health and well-being. In a

study of the outcomes of mentoring, Rhodes and DuBois (2008) found that adolescents involved

in mentoring programs often improved in a number of areas; one key area being better health.

Loeser (2008) also listed a number of benefits related to youth mentoring that both directly and indirectly impact the lives of youth. His research found that positive adult and youth relationships like mentoring are among the leading factors that help young people avoid suicide, depression, sexual risky behavior, and teenage pregnancy. In a related study, having a mentor increased the likelihood of youth engaging in increased levels of physical activity as well as using birth control on a more regular basis (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005). Additionally, youth in mentoring relationships are less likely to engage in violent acts or abuse drugs and alcohol (Dappen & Iserhagen, 2005)

Parents are often listed as a critical component of successful mentoring initiatives and their feedback has been instrumental in helping researchers uncover the breadth of benefits that programs may be yielding. Successful mentoring can improve the emotional connections youth have with their parents and can even improve child-parent relationships for youth in foster situations as well (Britner, Balcazar, Blechman, Blinn-Pike, & Larose, 2006). When parents of youth who participated in a New York City BBBSA program were surveyed regarding their thoughts about their children's mentoring experiences, 63% revealed their child's attitude and behavior improved significantly as a result of having a mentor (Royse, 1998). Mothers of at-risk Black male youth who were engaged in mentoring to address their delinquency and mental illness reported decreases in problematic behaviors both at home and in school (Keating et al., 2002).

In addition to the viewpoints of parents about the impact of mentoring on their children, studies have analyzed ways youth view their parents as a result of being a part of a mentoring relationship, and some of the results have been favorable as well. In comparison to youth without

mentors, those with mentors often express positive relationships with their parents and these

positive relationships often transfer to teachers and the other adults in their lives (Rhodes et al.,

2000).

Mentoring and African American Males

Despite the staggering statistics on Black males in high school, college, and the penal

system, formal and informal mentoring has been adopted as a viable option for improving the

state of young Black males. Mentors play a pivotal role, particularly in the lives of Black male

students and are instrumental in developing their gifts and talents, and increasing their

motivation (Whiting, 2006). One study, conducted by Parker and Reckdenwald (2008), measured

the influence of older Black men serving as role models in reducing violence in the lives of

African American juveniles. This study further showed that particularly in urban areas, older

Black males (who are traditionally employed and married), play a vital part in helping reduce

juvenile crimes, and can contribute to as much as a 23% decrease in Black youth violence. In a

related analysis, the presence of older Black men also helped reduce the number of aggravated

assault arrests among Black juveniles (Parker & Maggard, 2009). Both studies helped to reveal

the significance of older Black men being visible and involved in their communities and how the

degree of violence in urban communities can be influenced by the number of Black male role

models available in the lives of the Black youth.

Positive results of mentoring related to school performance and behaviors of Black male

students have been identified in a variety of cases. In a longitudinal study conducted in South

Carolina where a group of Black male middle school adolescents were mentored by college

students, negative incidents of attendance and discipline decreased, and participants whose

grades were below average demonstrated positive outcomes as a result of the experience (Whiting & Mallory, 2007). Although deemed limited, the findings from Wyatt's (2000) analysis of an Afrocentric male mentoring program helped to increase the self-concept and academic progress of the adolescent male participants. Additionally, results from a mentoring program designed to help boost test scores in a number North Carolina elementary and middle schools increased standardized test achievement particularly for those African American males who were identified as having a disability (Anderson, 2005).

In addition to these examples, other examples of structured mentoring initiatives geared toward African American male youth have been implemented throughout the country. To help address some of the academic disparities among low-performing Black male youth in Chicago, Illinois, a professional school counselor created a weekly after school mentoring program called Brotherhood which yielded favorable results for the male students who participated. Established in 2004, the Brotherhood program was based on a 30-week curriculum modeled after the American School Counselor Association principles of academic, career, and personal/social development, and adopted the goal of improving Black male graduation rates as the main objective (Wyatt, 2009). Wyatt (2009) noted quantitative results of a 4-year evaluation of the program that showed a 16% increase of participant GPAs, and data that indicated notable success among the Brotherhood participants compared to nonparticipants (nonparticipants performed about 60% lower). Participants also reported that the Brotherhood program helped them prepare for college readiness (64%), helped them understand the importance of academics (85%), helped them set and achieve their goals (88%), and helped them acquire the interpersonal skills to respect themselves and others (91%) (Wyatt, 2009).

The Africentric Adolescent and Family Rites of Passage Program sponsored by the MAAT Center for Human and Organizational Enhancement Inc. (Washington, DC) is another example of the impact mentoring can have in the lives of African American male youth. Created to help prevent substance abuse and antisocial behaviors among Black adolescent males, it successfully accomplished the goal of increasing the awareness of drug abuse among the participants. Additionally, positive racial identity increased among the young men, and it significantly raised their levels of self-esteem (Harvey & Hill, 2004). Parents also responded favorably to the program, and expressed that it had a positive impact on them (as parents), and the relationships with their sons improved (Harvey & Hill, 2004).

Structured mentoring programs can also serve to advance the educational pursuits of African-American male youth. Based on a study of youth in one of America's major cities, Hickman and Garvey (2006) reported that youth in mentoring programs were as much as 3 times more likely to attend college or some form of postsecondary training than the students in the control group. Dubois and Silverthorn (2005) also found that Black youth (in addition to the other ethnic groups who were studied) were more likely to complete high school and attend college as a result of having a mentor.

Several mentoring programs for Black males exist on various university campuses across the country and have been successful in helping to increase college enrollment and improve retention rates (an issue previously identified that affects Black males in college). Among the most successful means of assisting Black males are being accomplished by states that have enacted programs throughout their entire university systems like in Georgia and New York. Two of the 17 states who graduate less than 50% of Black males, they have been able to help address

the problem through improving their college retention rates by establishing support programs with the sole purpose of helping their Black male students remain in college and graduate once they enroll. Since 2002, Georgia's African-American Male Initiative has 25 programs across 19 of their campuses and has been able to increase Black male enrollment by nearly 25% (Schmidt, 2008). Since 2004, the City University of New York has operated 26 Black Male Initiative programs since 2004 across 16 campuses serving students from 2-year schools to graduate schools with the goal of keeping them enrolled and engaged on campus to help them successfully matriculate. In these cases, the mentoring relationships prove to have both immediate and long-term educational benefits for African American male youth.

Leadership

Leadership can be defined in a variety of ways, and my definition and application of leadership has noticeably evolved during the course of this study to help understand the role of the Kappa League program in the lives of the young men who were mentored. Prior to my work in this area, my views of leadership were very basic and could even be considered naïve to a certain degree. My definition traditionally was based more on the notion of "management" than on actual leadership, and I simply considered good leaders as people who were able to get others to obey and follow their instructions. I failed to recognize the personal characteristics that define a leader's practice, and that true leadership has many layers requiring one to master different traits as well as having the ability to apply a variety of leadership styles (Hernon & Rossiter, 2006).

In my earlier views of leadership, I often made the mistake of inappropriately defining effective leadership based upon one's level of education. For a number of leadership positions,

whether political, corporate, educational, or even civic, a primary qualification seemed to be the amount of education one has acquired. While intellectual capacity is a favorable quality, I have come to understand that there are many additional factors impacting one's ability to be looked upon as an effective leader. I have since come to the realization, while education is important, it is only one of a number of traits that truly make leaders effective, since other traits like motivation, inspiration, empathy and the ability to listen are also highly regarded leadership characteristics (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). Fullan (2001) appropriately summed it up when he noted that effective leaders are not characterized by their high IQ, but by their ability to combine their book knowledge with Emotional Intelligence (EI).

Emotional Intelligence strongly influenced my personal capacity to exhibit the type of leadership necessary to help improve the academic levels of the Kappa League young men, and to prepare them for college. I learned that effective leaders have a firm grasp of their own EI, and possess the ability to understand the emotional makeup of others as well. It was important for me to be in tune with my personal values concerning academic success and higher education and in turn, be able to adapt appropriately to provide the young men what they specifically needed to be successful, even if it deviated from my own beliefs. Goleman et al., (2002) termed this concept "resonance," and suggested when leaders exercise resonant practices they increase their capacity to navigate through their member's negative qualities and tap into their passions, gifts, and talents generating change in the individual and in the overall organization.

In my efforts to operate as an effective leader in my study of the young men in my NBA Kappa League program, I endeavored to practice resonance, and in the process did my best to align my core values within the competencies of the EI domains. In each of the following

categories: self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness, there were a number of qualities that I believed strongly in, and applied during my research and data collection techniques. However, to an even larger extent, the application of these characteristics became essential throughout my interactions with the young men and parents during the variety of Kappa League initiatives that I promoted.

In relation to self-awareness, I embraced emotional self-awareness and self-confidence in my work with the Kappa League seniors. To work effectively as a leader it was critical for me to operate with a strong sense of identity and understanding of my leadership role. I needed to be cognizant of the theories that framed my practice, and had to believe in my ability to effectively implement those theories to accomplish the tasks required to help encourage the Kappa League high school seniors (the primary youth participants in this study). I also had to be confident in my ability to motivate my fraternity brothers as well, which was integral to helping generate success in reaching the young men. In the midst of a barrage of negative reports and stories about Black males, the young men needed me (and the men of my fraternity) to exude confidence in our ability to help them succeed and accomplish the lofty goals we established for them. Our hope was that our self-confident attitudes would transfer onto them, resulting in their own increased self-awareness and confidence in their abilities to do well in high school and subsequently pursue college.

Within the EI domain of self-management, I embodied achievement and optimism. Since becoming an educator 11 years ago, I have been a staunch proponent of achievement and not only preached it directly to the Kappa Leaguers during the course of the program, but did my best to model it in my actions as well. Throughout the activities related to this action research

study, I tried to be a leader who set a high bar of achievement in each of my personal endeavors and established the same expectations with the young men, and among my fraternity brothers who worked alongside of me as mentors.

Coupled with my motivation toward achievement, I was careful to maintain an attitude of optimism as well. Regardless of my personal feelings or particular issues at hand, I realized the Kappa Leaguers I was leading looked to me for strength and encouragement even in the toughest of situations. As I grew as a leader I also embraced the responsibility of being an example for the young men of my program and hoped my positive outlook on education and achievement would allow them to embrace academic success and college enrollment as realistic aspirations.

Under social awareness, it was essential for me to put empathy into practice. I realized early on that despite being the leader, I was unable to completely identify with each of the young men or families I served. However, I understood I assumed the capacity to show them compassion and understanding nonetheless. For example, unlike a number of my Kappa Leaguers, I was raised in a household with both of my natural parents who were very involved in all areas of my life, particularly my educational pursuits. Although I was not able to completely identify with my young men growing up without an active father, I was sensitive to their unique needs as young men growing up in single-parent homes. When necessary, I connected them to mentors in the form of my fraternity brothers who had similar upbringings and who could better relate to some of the challenges they experienced. Even when I worked closely with those young men and families, I was always cognizant of their circumstances and interacted with them respectfully.

However, while being conscious of the importance of leading with empathy, I made every effort to reinforce discipline and did not allow the Kappa Leaguers to make excuses for not striving for achievement. When explaining the trend of leaders moving toward "relationship-first" leadership styles, Fullan (2001) listed managing with tough empathy as one way to inspire members. I adapted this type of empathy in a sincere effort to be sensitive to the needs of the young men while exposing them to the reality that regardless of their life circumstances, hard work was essential to achieving success. Instead of feeding into some of their explanations for why they could not make the honor roll or might not get into college, I helped create a culture within the NBA Kappa League program where achievement was not an option and the pursuit of college was mandatory.

Some of the best leaders are skilled at several different leadership styles, and have the ability to move between styles as determined by the circumstances (Goleman, 2000). In addition to adopting the EI competencies, within this study, there were several specific theories that informed my leadership practice. While there are only a few I will mention, I am certain I will adopt additional styles as I continue to develop my leadership identity and explore new ways to help young men in my future work with the NBA Kappa League. These theories include transformational, affiliative leadership and visionary leadership.

Transformational leaders create environments where members are inspired to follow the leader's direction as opposed to carrying out tasks solely due to obligation or some form of incentive. Leaders who practice this leadership style work to establish shared goals and a shared vision. Transformational leaders tend to have high expectations for their members, and encourage them to aspire to even greater tasks than they may be assuming at that particular

moment by increasing their motivation and morality (Fairholm, 2001). In addition to increasing the energy of the members, when this leadership style is practiced effectively, both leaders and followers enhance one another's levels of motivation (Wren, 1995).

An important aspect of transformational leadership theory is the ability of the leader to establish trust and to gain the confidence of their members. Transformational leaders are usually able to generate trust as a result of their desire to mentor and empower their members into reaching their full potential (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Part of the transformational leader's commitment toward empowerment often includes helping their members develop future goals, and working with them to help achieve those goals. Instead of simply viewing the work with their members as completing a task, they view their work as having great value, and purpose. I have been proud to help the Kappa League become an organization motivated by "purpose," driven by the goal of helping young men develop academically and prepare for college.

Operating as a transformational leader while assisting the young men of Kappa League, I have worked to position myself to be able to offer the best advice and direction possible to the young men as well as my fraternity brothers who have worked along with me. As stated by Goleman et al. (2002), "Throughout history… the leader in any human group has been the one to whom others look for assurance and clarity when facing uncertainty or threat, or when there is a job to be done" (p. 5). As a transformational leader I endeavored to set a tone where the young men and my fraternity brothers could be confident in my judgment and decisions, as well as comfortable enough to approach me whenever necessary when they needed something to be done in their best interest or in the best interest of the Kappa League program.

Affiliative leaders are typically concerned about fostering positive relationships. The leadership style revolves around people, and an individual's emotions are valued more than specific tasks (Goleman, 2000). Affiliative leaders generally put people first and focus on their well-being over their members' work or goals they are expected to accomplish. If a decision needed to be made between addressing a task, and assisting a member with a personal situation, the affiliative leader would likely assist the member with the problem.

As an affiliative leader I strived to create a system in my work in the NBA Kappa League where mutual trust and mutual respect were exhibited. My major responsibility in this style was to create harmony and build emotional bonds with my fraternity brothers who served with me as advisors, and assumed the role of mentors for the young men in the program. Helping to keep them happy and working to earn their loyalty was essential, especially since I was not providing them with tangible rewards in exchange for their work with the Kappa League. Although I needed my fraternity brothers to work and complete tasks to help lead the Kappa League program, I had to provide them with ample positive feedback and extend my appreciation toward them to maintain good relationships and to keep them content.

Similarly, during my interactions with the young men in the Kappa League program, I found myself often operating as an affiliative leader. To earn the trust and respect of the young men, they had to feel comfortable that I was being sincere, and genuinely cared about them as young men. Like I had to do with my fraternity brothers, I worked to develop emotional bonds with them and did my best to help them realize they could trust me. While I was determined for them to be engaged in the tasks and activities to improve their grades, behavior, and attitudes, I realized they first needed to recognize my loyalty toward them.

Also critical in my interactions with the young men as an affiliative leader was my communication and connection. How we (my fraternity brothers and I) spoke to the young men was important for their ability to relate to us and to embrace being in the Kappa League program. Balancing strict expectations and verbal admonishing with an ample amount of encouragement and positive feedback was important. Concerning their connection to the program, affiliative leaders have been said to be skilled at building a sense of belonging (Goleman, 2000). This was essential to get them to adopt the concept of being a "Kappa Leaguer." My goal was for each young man to see himself as a "Kappa Leaguer" and a direct extension of me and my fraternity brothers as members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. As a fraternity we consider ourselves to be real brothers, and we wanted the young men to have a similar relationship with one another, and with us (being our little brothers).

Finally, visionary leadership is an emerging style quickly gaining popularity among leaders in a number of fields. In fact, Dwivedi noted that it has risen in interest and practice in a variety of disciplines since the 1990s (Dwivedi, 2006). Much of the visionary leadership theory resembles beliefs from the transformational leadership perspective, particularly with regard to shared vision, and empowering members. One aspect of visionary leadership theory that distinguishes it even from transformational views is the ability of the leader to have mindset necessary to plan ahead and develop goals for the future. When describing this aspect of visionary leadership, Wren (1995) discussed the leader's ability to think clearly over periods of 5 to 10 years and to be able to articulate each step needed to reach those long-term goals until they are successfully reached.

Dwivedi (2006) also noted that visionary leaders have the ability to take whatever comes their way and reinvent it, and can simply create new ways of getting things done. According to Wren (1995), other important characteristics of visionary leaders include expressing visions, explaining visions clearly, extending visions, and expanding visions. However one of the most important qualities visionary leaders must possess is the understanding that what they do makes a difference (Wren, 1995).

As a visionary leader, I had the responsibility of keeping my fraternity brothers motivated to work with the Kappa League young men. In a situation where men, with other responsibilities and often their own children to tend to, were being called upon on a monthly basis (sometimes more often) to commit to a group of teenage boys, the need for constant doses of inspiration and encouragement was critical. However, by embracing visionary leadership practices, I was able to help develop a coalition of men who became dedicated to the cause of the Kappa League and were able to see the long-term benefits of the program as well as recognize that what we were doing was making a difference.

As stated by Goleman et al. (2002), "By continually reminding people of the larger purpose of their work, the visionary leader lends a grand meaning to otherwise workaday, mundane tasks" (p. 58). Instead of being able to offer incentives through monetary benefits or opportunities for promotion (like in a work situation), as the visionary leader I had to do my best to make a connection with my fraternity brothers to remind them of that "larger purpose" and how their efforts were having a lasting impact in the lives of the young men we were mentoring. I continually reminded them that their positive influence was valuable, and the insight they provided was helping the young men persevere through some of the most difficult challenges of

their lives. I have attributed much of my visionary leadership ability as the cause of the Kappa League program's longevity and continued success.

I have come to understand, regardless of the particular leadership style I might be operating, that in situations where leadership is implemented successfully, those involved in the process recognize the important responsibilities assumed by both the leader and follower. It is when harmony exists between these roles that individuals and groups can benefit, and a true impact is made. According to Wren (1995) "Followers and leaders develop a relationship wherein they influence one another as well as the organization and society" (p. 192). As opposed to a belief system that place barriers between leaders and followers, effective leadership relationships thrive on the leaders and followers performing their individual roles well, while maintaining a cooperative spirit in the process.

Leading up to this study, I had been relatively pleased with the success of the NBA Kappa League mentoring program. However after reflecting on the successes as well as the academic failures of the young men, I realized that changes needed to be made in how the program was implemented. I realized that in order for the young men to be in the best position to succeed academically in their current school as well as be better prepared for college, the manner in which the program was being administered needed to be modified to place greater emphasis on academic achievement. While the lessons we were teaching on topics such as etiquette, interacting with females, and careers were important for helping the young men develop into well-rounded citizens, emphasis on academic success needed to be central to our work.

As a result, during this study, I led the Kappa League committee in revamping the content of the New Brunswick Kappa League program to include activities, lessons, speakers,

trips, and special sessions geared toward academics and college preparation. Utilizing my committee of fraternity brothers, the program was restructured and a new curriculum was drafted outlining new events to be incorporated for the young men and their parents. Reflection helped me identify a problem that needed to be rectified, and because of that reflection, I was able to help improve my mentoring program focus and eventual outcomes for the young men who participated in this study as well as for the young men who will be participating in the NBA Kappa League in the future.

Reflective practice was a critical and valuable leadership skill that I relied upon heavily throughout the course of this study. While I was hesitant to embrace the concept early on, as my work with the young men developed and eventually progressed, I began to understand and appreciate the value of taking time to review my actions to ensure I was making responsible decisions. Particularly throughout the action research cycles, reflection became critical in helping determine whether the plans and actions that were implemented were actually benefitting the Kappa Leaguers in any way. By engaging in reflective practice individually as a leader, and collectively when I met with my Kappa League advisory committee of fraternity brothers, I was able to avoid having to wonder (without having an answer) whether or not the actions we set forth were actually in the best interest of the young men. Reflection provided the answers and led us to developing the appropriate plans and actions that needed to occur in the subsequent cycle, which will be described in more detail in the methodology chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The research study was designed to help measure the effectiveness the New Brunswick Kappa League mentoring program could have in enhancing the academic achievement and college preparation of a group of African American males. Based on the information presented in Chapter 2, efforts geared towards the improvement of Black males, particularly with regard to their academic improvement and college readiness is much needed. My direct involvement as the advisor of the NBA Kappa League afforded me the opportunity to witness positive change among the participants during the course of their participation in the program. However, a formal means of analysis to adequately record results in a more valid manner was long overdue. In order to best accomplish that task, I implemented a variety of strategies in the process of my research design, collection of data, cycles of change, and data analysis. Other integral components of this chapter include the identification of the setting, participants, and the change framework used throughout the study.

Research Design

This study was conducted using an action research approach. Hinchey (2008) defined action research as "A process of systematic inquiry, usually cyclical, conducted by those inside a community rather than by outside experts" (p. 4). As the director of the New Brunswick Kappa League program, I was considered an "insider" which afforded me the opportunity to also play the role of the researcher leading the study. While the primary researcher role is valuable in any study, action research emphasizes the importance of collaborating with others as change agents.

In referring to action research being characterized in this way, Glense (2006) defined it as a process that helps groups of people (and organizations) define problems, understand situations, and to become a part of the process to resolve their problems.

A traditional study measuring the impact of the NBA Kappa League program on the lives of its young male participants, would be conducted by a researcher unfamiliar with the NBA Kappa League and the New Brunswick Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., the organization that sponsors the program. However, by conducting the research in the action research style while enlisting the support of my fraternity brothers, I brought a greater understanding of what the young men needed since I had been working with them for a number of years. As a result, I was able to begin the inquiry process based on my wealth of experiences with the young men, and the feedback and insight I gained from the relationships I had already formed. Although I was not certain about where the research would lead me, I at least had a place to start by defining the area I wanted to improve; the college preparation of the young men.

In addition to being characterized by having an insider conducting the study, the process of action research is also recognized as a model of social inquiry involving a spiral of interlocking cycles (Schwandt, 2001). While other research styles tend to be linear in nature, action researchers move through typically three or four recurring acts in the process of improving upon an identified problem. In this study, fours steps were used repeatedly in my efforts to help determine ways to help prepare the high school juniors and senior Kappa Leaguers for college. The four steps I implemented (which will be described in detail later in this chapter) were as follows: Plan, Act, Observe, and Reflect.

Going through these four steps a number times throughout this study helped me become

aware of what the group of Kappa Leaguers needed as reported directly from the young men

themselves. This unique aspect in action research of acquiring information to help solve the

problem directly from the participants affected by the issue is a key component of this type of

research design. Hinchey (2008) noted that theorist John Collier emphasized the importance of

this element of action research as far back as 1945 when he suggested that those impacted by

research findings should be the ones involved in helping to shape them.

Coupled with Hinchey's (2008) first definition of action research, she went on to add,

"its goal is to identify action that will generate some improvement the researcher believes

important" (p. 4). As the researcher, I believed all of the work my organization did with the

young men was important, but I also realized a specific focus was necessary to create that

important improvement. After working with these African American young men, I determined

one of the most important actions I could help to improve was their ability to succeed

academically and have the information necessary to help facilitate their ability to enroll in

college. Following the guidelines of action research gave me the ability to embark on the process

of generating a lasting impact in the lives of the young men in this study, and to possibly

influence those still participating in the NBA Kappa League program as well.

Data Collection Strategies

To acquire the necessary data from the research participants, quantitative and qualitative

methods were conducted throughout the course of this study which emerged into a mixed-

methods approach. A quantitative study is

An inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory (that has already been determined) composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory hold true (Creswell, 1994, p. 2).

While similarly, qualitative research is also an inquiry process seeking to understand a social or human problem, it differs in that it does not begin with a predetermined theory (although one may eventually arise), the variables are more complex and difficult to measure, and the researcher is more involved (Glense, 2006).

In certain instances, such as when quantitative and qualitative approaches help to inform one another, the combination of methods is considered a "mixed methods" approach. Mixed methods research involves an investigator who engages in the process of collecting and analyzing data, integrating the findings, drawing conclusions using quantitative and qualitative methods (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008). While the use of quantitative and qualitative methods was often limited to a means of increasing triangulation, it has been embraced as a viable aspect of research design which proved to be beneficial for my study. Having only a quantitative data collection component in the form of my questionnaire, would have limited the reliability of my work. However, by adding a qualitative data collection strategy through the inclusion of a focus group increased the likelihood of my results being more widely accepted.

The main quantitative approach used to gather data about the possible benefits and general assessment of the mentoring program and its educational benefits was a questionnaire (or survey). Considered an efficient means of collecting large amounts of data about what people think, shortcoming to questionnaires can include low response rate, high postage costs (if

mailing), and poorly worded questions yielding meaningless results (Hinchey, 2008).

Fortunately, I was able to use a single-stage sampling procedure, and had direct access to administer my questionnaire to each of my NBA Kappa League participants and their parents in a face-to-face manner (Creswell, 1994). This allowed for me to have a 100% response rate for each person I surveyed because I was able to collect the questionnaires immediately from the participants and get the data instantly. By administering the instruments in an interview format, it proved to be cost-effective since I also saved money on postage.

The questionnaire research process done with the target group of NBA Kappa League participants, and the parents of the participants took place several times throughout the study and the main survey that is included in the results chapter of this study was conducted during the summer and fall of 2010. The Kappa League young men were asked to respond to a series of statements basically describing possible benefits of different aspects of the NBA Kappa League mentoring program, with a particular focus on the impact the program may have made in the young men's academic performance and college interest. A similar questionnaire was administered to the parents of each of those young men, to help gauge their perceptions about the ways their son might have benefitted from the NBA Kappa League program in those same areas. The items on both questionnaires were measured on a 4-point Likert-type rating scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2= agree, 3= disagree, and 4 = strongly agree). Additionally, each questionnaire included a page of open ended questions which allowed respondents to expound upon some of the topics that were present in the Likert format. Each survey ended with a page of information for respondents to identify personal characteristics such as number of years in the Kappa League program and family makeup (who lives in the participant's household).

Each of the questionnaires used throughout this study was a self-designed instrument. Since I established the NBA Kappa League program I also helped design the goals and objectives that the young men should have been learning. As a result, I felt I best understood how to design the questionnaire instrument to help extract the feelings of the young men and their parents. Since some of the young men participating in the study were still 17 years-old during the time I asked them to complete the questionnaire, I made sure their parents completed an informed consent form allowing them to take part in the study.

To help ensure my questionnaires were valid and would yield meaningful results, I conducted pilot surveys with a small group of NBA young men and parents to test the strength of my questions. The pilot survey helped me identify that some of my questions needed to be reworded to provide better clarity to the participants. I had to make sure the Likert-type portion as well as the open-ended questions were free of content that could lead the respondents toward a particular response, and I had to change a few questions that were addressing multiple issues in one statement. However, after correcting the problems, I had greater confidence in the document appropriateness and most of my original items were used in the final product.

Once finalized, both the student and parent questionnaires were given in the summer, immediately after the young men graduated from high school. The goal was to get the thoughts about the program's influences on the young men and parents while they were still fresh in their minds. I also did my best to administer all of them during the summer to catch the young men before they went off to college and became engaged in other activities which might make it more difficult for me to reach them. While I hoped to administer the surveys at a formal Kappa League meeting, I did not have the final version until July, well after our final session of the 2009-2010

school year had passed. As a result, I spent much of the late summer into the fall months visiting individual homes to administer the surveys individually. Despite having excellent relationships with the Kappa Leaguers and their families, gaining access to some of them to administer the surveys was challenging and took longer than I had originally anticipated.

Much of the qualitative data from this study was collected from my observations of the young men as they engaged in the mentoring program monthly meetings and other events from January 2009 to January 2011. At times, I observed the young men's attendance rates, levels of engagement, the degree in which they completed the assignments we assigned to them, and even their verbal thoughts about the program's influence on their lives. Some of the data from the qualitative approaches was taken through written notes and other data was collected through the use of a recording device.

While the quantitative data collected through the questionnaires was beneficial, I felt it would be useful to also utilize a focus group to gather qualitative data. One of the shortcomings of collecting information through questionnaires is they sometimes fail to render rich feedback and in-depth responses (Patten, 2001). Including some form of interview in the research study was an effective way for me to gather deeper thoughts from the young men and to explore their feelings about their experiences of the Kappa League program a little further.

I interviewed a sample of six young men who participated in the survey study after their first semester of college. To get a variety of perspectives, I included young men from my program who made different college choices. I selected young men who attended historically Black colleges, some who attended non-Black colleges (or majority White colleges), and those who attended community colleges in New Jersey.

The purpose of the focus group was to gain additional perspectives from the young men about some of the questions on the survey related to the impact their participation in the NBA Kappa League may have had on their grades and interest in college. I wanted to be able to solicit additional thoughts and ideas that the young men might not have been able to express on the survey, but could be valuable information to be included in the study. In addition to the questions related to the survey, I wanted to get an idea about their views of their experiences after being in college for a semester. The survey gauged their views of how the Kappa League influenced them prior to going to college, and I purposely waited until after the first semester to conduct the focus group to see if their feelings about Kappa League changed or remained the same after being exposed to actual college life.

I purposely crafted the focus group in a semi-structured interview style where I had a predetermined set of questions to ask the participants. However, on occasion, I allowed for the young men to expound on their thoughts even when it veered away from my original question. In the interest of time I did not allow that to happen too often during the focus group, and I was careful to refocus the group when the extra comments became too long.

To collect the data from the focus group, I used a digital recording device. After each the interview session, to conserve time I enlisted the services of an expert to transcribe the focus group session from the recorder into typed form. This was a beneficial investment that expedited my ability to analyze the content of the focus group and use it to apply to my results chapter.

Setting

In order to adequately assess the possible academic benefits of mentoring teenage Black males, this survey research project targeted a group of young men participating in the New

Brunswick Kappa League program. The New Brunswick Kappa League is a mentoring initiative sponsored and coordinated by men from the New Brunswick Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Incorporated. Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Incorporated is an international African American male fraternity with the purpose of encouraging members to achieve in every field of human endeavor. Reaching its Centennial anniversary on January 5, 2011, the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity was founded by 10 college students at the University of Indiana in Bloomington, Indiana. Grossly outnumbered on a campus mainly filled with White students, these African American males formed this fraternal bond to support one another academically, emotionally, spiritually, and socially during their college years.

The Kappa Leadership League

The New Brunswick Alumni Chapter is one of hundreds of the fraternity's chapters made up of men who are members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity but have graduated from college and possess a desire to continue to interact with fraternity members and strive for excellence while in graduate school and within their various professions. A vast amount of the men in the alumni chapters were initiated into the fraternity while attending their undergraduate universities in various parts of the country and many became members after graduating college as a part of the alumni chapter.

The men of the New Brunswick Alumni Chapter reside and or work largely in New Jersey's Middlesex and Somerset Counties. Among other community activities, the men of New Brunswick Alumni chapter are most invested in sponsoring the New Brunswick Kappa League program, and are all committed to helping young men reach their potential and become successful in secondary school, college, and in their future careers. Though a part of the National

Fraternity's agenda, the New Brunswick Alumni chapter has made "reaching young Black men" their ultimate mission and goal which is manifested through their work with the young men in the New Brunswick Kappa League.

The Kappa League program meets monthly, usually at Rutgers University in Piscataway, New Jersey where the activities and sessions take place. The program has been in existence for about 5 years, and it was specifically designed to help African American middle and high school students establish and achieve worthy goals and to make positive contributions in their homes, neighborhoods, schools, and communities. This is accomplished through topical discussions and activities, guest speakers, field trips, and participation in conferences, regular community service, and a wealth of other opportunities. It is primarily a free program for students and their families, and the New Brunswick Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi funds virtually all of the events. The program provides a variety of activities for the young men covering topics such as leadership, career planning, goal-setting, Black history, academic achievement, and college preparation. While the program has spanned the course of 5 years, the study has spanned from the fall of 2009 into the winter of 2011.

Participants

Young men who participated in the New Brunswick Kappa League mentoring program were the main participants in this action research study. I started the New Brunswick Kappa League in January 2006 in response to the request of my fraternity brothers. Beginning with trip to a New Jersey Nets basketball game with 15 of my eighth grade middle school students from Piscataway, New Jersey, the program has developed into a structured monthly initiative serving approximately 40 middle and high school young men. Modeling some of the concepts from a

friend and colleague Lennox Small's (2007) MALES (Mentoring and Learning Equals Success) program, I was able to develop the Kappa League into a similar organized initiative.

From its inception, the New Brunswick Kappa League was developed with a broad scope to provide support to African American male youth with a variety of needs. The inaugural group of 15 young men from my middle school was targeted based on previous requests from parents (mainly single mothers) who were looking for positive male influences to interact with their sons. As the program has evolved, it has spread primarily by word of mouth and has included young men from other communities (outside of Piscataway) in addition to growing in number. Young men now come from a variety of family backgrounds, span from grades levels 7-12, and are enrolled in at least 17 different schools.

Since much of the research focused on uncovering the program benefits related to high school achievement and college preparation, the young men who matriculated through the Kappa League program and graduated high school in June of 2010 (many of whom were among the original mentoring cohort starting in 2006), as well as their parents/guardians, were the primary focus of this study. The participants were recent high school graduates, male, and African American. While each young man was a high school graduate, participants attended various public and private high schools in New Jersey's Middlesex and Somerset counties. Participants' academic achievement levels varied as well, as some young men graduated with honors, and some barely met the minimal graduation requirements.

More specifically, a total of 16 young men with the characteristics previously described participated in the study. Nine of them were a part of the Kappa League for 5 years, three were a

part of the program for 4 years, three were members for 3 years, and one young man joined prior to his junior year of high school and was in the program for 2 years.

The young men came from various family backgrounds, and lived in a few different household settings. Five participants resided with both natural parents, and one young man lived in a home with one natural parent and a stepparent. A total of nine young men lived in single-parent households, eight with their mothers, and one with his father. The remaining young man who took part in the study lived with his grandmother.

The student participants' relationships with their fathers, in particular, varied as well. Since six young men lived with their natural fathers, they each reported interacting with their father on a daily basis. Two young men reported they communicated with their father on a weekly basis, another two reported communicating with their father on a monthly basis, and yet another two reported that they only communicated with their fathers a few times a year. Finally, four young men acknowledged having no relationship with their natural father.

The last demographic description of the student participants related to their after high school plans. Most young men were in two categories: attending a 4-year college or attending a 2-year college. At the time the young men took the survey, nine were scheduled to enroll in 4-year colleges and six in 2-year colleges. One young man had no college plans lined up and planned to work instead.

Change Framework

Determining the effectiveness of the New Brunswick Kappa League program's influence in preparing participants for college required a reasonable plan and appropriate action. However,

above all it took authentic leadership (as discussed in Chapter 2) to generate the change

necessary to make the program relevant enough to be the focus of such a major research project.

To help me implement the change needed to successfully conduct this action research study, I

relied upon the work of Fullan and Kotter. By drawing upon the authors' leadership and change

frameworks, I was able to develop a plan to help me transform the NBA Kappa League from an

informal, virtually "one-man" endeavor, to a structured mentoring initiative made up of the

collective efforts of a committee of seven mentors backed by an entire fraternity chapter of 25

men. The major change involved the shift from a laissez-faire program implementation to an

organized action plan designed to address multiple developmental issues affecting Black male

youth with emphasis on strategies to offer them information and direction to assist in their

academic growth and college preparation.

From the onset, it was incumbent upon me to begin the process of change with a firm

grasp of moral purpose. According to Fullan (2001), "Authentic leaders anchor their practice in

ideas, values, and commitments, exhibit distinctive qualities of style and substance, and can be

trusted to be morally diligent in advancing the enterprises they lead" (p. 14). While my ability to

operate as an authentic leader throughout the growth of the NBA Kappa League program was not

predicated on moral purpose alone, my desire to make a difference in the lives of young Black

males guided my actions and shaped my decisions.

Since I have strived to incorporate a strong sense of moral purpose in each of my life's

endeavors, it was a natural characteristic for me to embrace at the start of this program. As an

educator, my daily work involves helping to bring out the best in young people, and that same

altruistic spirit is what I tapped into to launch the New Brunswick Kappa League in 2005. With

no funding lined up, no committee established to support my efforts, and no formal program plan in place, I was doubtful that I had the wherewithal to get the program started, let alone maintain it for any significant period of time. However, despite all the things I lacked, I was not short of the moral purpose behind the work I did with the young men which provided me the motivation to forge ahead.

In addition to being a motivating factor for me, in my efforts to launch the NBA Kappa League mentoring program, a sense of moral purpose also became one of the tools I used to solidify the second stage of change, "building relationships." This was a critical step in the change process which involved the course of action I adopted to attract my fraternity brothers into supporting the NBA Kappa League. Regardless of how passionate I was about starting the program, the support resulting from the relationships with my fraternity brothers helped the program grow and become sustained.

The ability to establish meaningful relationships, like those I was able to form with the men of the New Brunswick Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi, were considered to be one of the most important components to the eventual success of my change efforts. According to Kotter (1996), such guiding coalitions, especially ones made up of the right people, a sense of trust, and unified focus are always essential. This proved true as I collaborated with my fraternity brothers in this NBA Kappa League endeavor and mentored young Black males.

While I already knew all of the men in my fraternity chapter, and deemed them the right people to support me, I had to move beyond familiarity to a place where I could earn their trust in my abilities to run a successful Kappa League program. I possessed the power to sustain a temporary mentoring endeavor made up of a few outings and some speakers providing

encouragement (for example). However, the support of the entire fraternity chapter was required before the program could reach a point of prolonged relevance and influence.

Although some of the men of my fraternity chapter supported me wholeheartedly from the beginning of the program in 2005, it was not until a formal vision was developed and properly communicated to the entire chapter that I gained collective support. Since I worked with Black male youth on a regular basis in my role as a school counselor, I was keenly aware of their shortcomings and challenges, as well as their capabilities and potential. However, to count on cooperative support by way of volunteering as mentors, and allocating fraternity money towards the Kappa League program, I had to convince my fraternity brothers that young Black males were indeed a worthy investment of our time and energy and had the potential I boasted about.

Through a combination of sharing statistics on Black males, reminding the men of their personal journeys toward achieving a college education and professional success, and lifting up the cause of supporting young Black males as an admirable mantle for our chapter to adopt, the vision was successfully summed up and conveyed. The data I presented on the academic performance and at-risk factors often unique to Black male youth, painted an indelible picture in the minds of my fraternity brothers about some of the disturbing realities befalling this group and the need for efforts to help reverse their depressing plight. Pricking the personal heartstrings and encouraging self-reflection allowed the men, many of whom were several decades beyond their teen years, to recall people in their lives who served as mentors and were instrumental in their rise to achievement. Finally, fostering the notion to redefine our chapter mission which as a result of the Kappa League's formation became "saving young Black males," seemed ideal for

the type of men we wanted to be known as. And it only came about because of the strong vision pointing to where the Kappa League program, if nurtured and supported, could eventually lead.

Among the most fulfilling of steps in the entire multiyear change process occurred in the 2009-2010 school year, the point where I was able to empower enough action to anchor change and establish the NBA Kappa League program as a permanent initiative the New Brunswick Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi would sponsor. While I noticed varying degrees of progress within the NBA Kappa League from 2005-2008, it was not until 2009 that I realized that I had been successful in empowering my fraternity brothers toward action to support the Kappa League program. In the process, the overall culture of my fraternity chapter as well as the fabric of the Kappa League program had shifted for the better.

A transformation of culture is one of the identifying factors that change has been "anchored" in a system, and cultural changes tend to occur subsequent to the following: after people's actions have been altered, and after the new behavior has produced some form of benefit for the group over time directly resulting from the changes (Kotter, 1996). Consequently, by altering my fraternity brothers' actions by encouraging them to volunteer alongside of me in mentoring the young men helped the NBA Kappa League eventually become permanently ingrained into the work (and culture) of the NBA Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi.

Nevertheless, changing the actions of my fraternity brothers was an arduous and overwhelming task, especially since I was one of the newest and youngest members of my chapter (which had been in existence almost 30 years) when I began the endeavor. However with the initial support of a few fraternity brothers, I consistently worked with the 10 to 15 young men (mainly eighth graders) who were the original Kappa League group that was mentored. Although

our monthly meetings were not always formal and the most organized, they were consistent and the young men and parents became committed to the program.

The years of growing commitment from the young men and parents eventually led to my fraternity brothers playing a more visible and supportive role in the NBA Kappa League as well. By the start of the 2009-2010 school year I finally had a formal committee of seven fraternity brothers to work with me solely for the purpose of promoting Kappa League initiatives. In addition to the creation of a Kappa League committee, my fraternity chapter included the NBA Kappa League in the NBA Chapter budget, pledging to allocate several thousand dollars to the program annually. Definitive broad-based actions by my fraternity brothers to take a hands-on approach to work directly with the Kappa League young men, and by supporting through a monetary investment, confirmed the NBA Kappa League was officially embraced by the masses and had become an anchored change.

In addition to my fraternity brothers attending meetings and extending financial support, the cultural change also became evident as the Kappa League program started to yield benefits to the NBA Chapter. It seemed like the more work we engaged in to mentor our Kappa League young men, the more notoriety and positive attention our fraternity chapter received. My behaviors and those of my fraternity brothers to help enrich the lives of Black male youth resulted in greater support from community members for our fraternity events and fundraisers. Surprisingly, our consistent work with our Kappa League even led to us receiving our first Kappa Alpha Psi Northeastern Province Award acknowledging our program as being one of the best in the region (covering the states from Maine to Delaware). Even after receiving that

recognition the NBA Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi continued to be recognized for exemplifying excellence and leadership for the work done with the Kappa League program.

Finally, while the actions I was able to generate within my fraternity brothers were great accomplishments, and the benefits rendered to the NBA Chapter were appreciated, I think the most remarkable change signifying the program being anchored was based on the outlook of my fraternity brothers. For the first 4 years of the program, my fraternity brothers viewed the Kappa League "my" program (meaning Alex's group). Starting in 2009, the Kappa League evolved from being my group to being referred to as "our" program (meaning NBA Chapter's group). Marked by more than a change in name, my fraternity brothers began to assume a sense of pride and ownership (that only a few other brothers and I had all along) for the NBA Kappa League, and for each young man in the program.

Action Research Cycles

In this study, to help determine the possible benefits of mentoring African American male youth, I engaged in five action research cycles that helped me move from recognizing a problem that needed to be addressed, to discovering ways to help address the problem, and understanding steps that needed to be taken to help prevent the problem from occurring again. The recursive process involved the following five cycles, each broken down into four progressive stages: Plan, Act, Observe, and Reflect.

Cycle 1

Plan. To gauge the level of college preparation for rising high school senior Kappa Leaguers. After directing the New Brunswick Kappa League program for several years I, along

with several fraternity brothers, determined that we needed to engage the young men in more goal-oriented activities. While we felt we were making an impact in various aspects of their lives, we had no specific "roadmap" outlined to help guide us in the specific areas we wanted to target, and that would serve as a motivating factor for the program as a whole. Since our fraternity was made up of a group of college educated Black men, we determined that a noble goal to guide our work with the NBA Kappa League would be to help encourage our young men to pursue college enrollment after high school.

Since most of the Kappa Leaguers were in their junior year of high school at the time, encouraging them to pursue college seemed like a worthwhile endeavor. Since we only met with the young men once or twice a month on average, we presumed that as Kappa League advisors our role would be to provide encouragement, and to "check-in" with them once in a while concerning their progress towards college. We also understood that each young man had a school counselor in their respective high schools to assist them with the steps involved in learning about and applying to college, and assumed each young man would use those resources for their main source of information.

Act. The act part of Cycle 1 was to administer the "Rising Senior Survey." As a means of determining what our large group of high school juniors were feeling with regard to college, I developed a basic survey for them to complete in the winter of their junior year of high school. This Rising Senior Survey (See Appendix A) was a one-page questionnaire developed by the researcher that asked the young men to complete information about their academic standing in high school, more specifically their grade point average (GPA) and SAT scores (if taken). Additionally, they were asked to complete information about the courses they would be taking

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during their senior year of high school, the colleges to which they planned to apply, and the people with whom they hoped to make recommendation letter requests. Finally, an open-ended question was included leaving room to pose questions about the college application process.

Observe. The results of the Rising Senior Survey were reviewed. After reviewing the results of the 13 high school juniors who completed the survey, there were a number of conclusions that I observed. Half of the young men knew their current grade point averages, while half of the young men did not. This bothered me since at such an important stage of their academic career, each young man should have at least had an idea about where they stood academically, especially since they were so close to becoming fully engaged in the college application process.

Another frustrating observation I made was, the academic level of the colleges the young men listed as those to which they planned to apply did not seem to align with the courses they were taking their senior year or their GPAs (at least for those who knew them). I had somewhat of an idea about general college admission requirements from my own collegiate experiences and from reviewing college catalogs. When examining the surveys, I recognized that the majority of colleges identified had prerequisite coursework as well as GPA requirements that were, on average, significantly higher than those the young men boasted.

On a more positive note, just about all of the Kappa Leaguers were able to list the academic courses they were scheduled to take during their senior year and all but a few had taken the SAT once. Additionally, most of the respondents also took the time to include at least one question about college. All of the information the young men completed was helpful to me, and the open-ended responses especially gave me specific feedback to ponder.

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Reflect. I determined that most of the Kappa Leaguers needed additional information about college. After reviewing each of the Rising Senior Surveys, I realized that for whatever reason, many of the Kappa Leaguers were confident that they wanted to attend college, but needed additional support and information to help them achieve that goal. While each young man was able to list several colleges of interest, most only included about one college that was reasonably aligned to their academic level while the others had expectations beyond their level of academic performance. This made it evident to me that college selection was an area where the Kappa Leaguers needed greater assistance.

While the young men attended a number of different high schools in New Jersey's Middlesex and Somerset counties, as a school counselor in a Middlesex county school, I was familiar with many of the programs and opportunities available through the guidance offices at a majority of these schools. Although a wealth of useful information about college (including evening workshops) had been offered, for whatever reason, my young men did not seem to acquire that information. As a result, I determined they would need additional opportunities to learn about the college application process. I also realized the NBA Kappa League program would have to adjust the program implementation to take a greater role in helping to prepare the young men for college, a more involved role than the original plan of simply providing them with encouragement and occasional support.

Cycle 2

Plan. The plan was to develop ways of informing the rising seniors and juniors about the college application process. The new task of the NBA Kappa League became having more of an influence in providing the young men with information and strategies to help prepare them for

college. After reflecting almost an entire month on the survey results and how to proceed in the new role of college preparation, the challenge turned into determining how to move swiftly and effectively enough to have an impact on the rising seniors. Since the NBA Kappa League usually took a hiatus from formal meetings during July and August, the idea arose to conduct special sessions for the rising seniors during those 2 months (and to include the rising juniors as well).

Act. The NBA Kappa League hosted two summer sessions specifically to provide information about college to the rising juniors and seniors. Once the idea of having special sessions to help prepare and inform the rising seniors and juniors about college was supported by the Kappa League committee, dates were decided upon to host the sessions at my home. In preparing for the meetings, I enlisted the help of a two fraternity brothers who worked in secondary and higher education and who proved to be valuable sources of information. Prior to the sessions with the young men, we met collectively to review the Rising Senior Surveys completed a few months earlier. Based on their responses, and questions, we made determinations about how to best approach the subject of college preparation, and what information to address during the sessions. In addition to the ideas that I prepared in collaboration with the NBA Kappa League committee, I invited the only two former Kappa League members (at that time) who had graduated high school and were in college, to talk to the seniors and juniors about their firsthand experiences in higher education.

Observe. Most young men attended the two sessions and were engaged. The sessions that took place over the summer were well attended and a vast majority of the rising seniors and juniors were present on both days. The young men arrived prepared to receive the information, brought notebooks and pens to take notes, and eagerly participated in the activities that were

presented. While we made efforts to address the questions participants wrote on their senior

surveys, many others were raised during the sessions by the young men. Also encouraging was

the fact that some of the young men brought friends (who were also seniors but not a part of the

NBA Kappa League) with them to the sessions to receive the information.

Reflect. Continued college support would be needed for the young men. Since hosting

the NBA Kappa League meetings specifically for college preparation was a new endeavor for the

program, I had no idea how it was going to turn out. Overall, I was pleased with the high

attendance level and the degree of interest and engagement the young men displayed. Due to

their active participation, we were able to cover a great deal of information with them and met

our predetermined goals of what we hoped to accomplish. Although my general assessment was

that the sessions were beneficial to the young men, I noticed from the questions and the

information the seniors shared about their progress towards applying to schools that most would

require additional support throughout the entire college application process.

Cycle 3

Plan. The plan was to explore additional opportunities for senior Kappa Leaguers to learn

more about the college application process**.** Once September of 2009 arrived, I knew it would be

difficult for me and the other NBA Kappa League program advisors to accommodate additional

sessions into the monthly schedule of activities we already planned, in order to assist the seniors

through the college selection and application process. While we made a commitment to do more

to assist the seniors, we still had a responsibility to provide other important information not

related to college to the Kappa Leaguers in the lower grade levels. To be able to adequately meet

the needs of all of our young men, regardless of age and grade, we explored college preparation

opportunities outside of the NBA Kappa League where we could refer the seniors and their parents to satisfy their need to gain additional information.

Act. The act was to partner with a weekly college club for the seniors (and juniors) to attend and gain information about various aspects of the college selection and application process. As a result, Kappa League seniors were encouraged the seniors to attend an existing community program that offered college preparation information on a weekly basis during the school year via activities, and speakers. Meeting on Wednesday evenings at a school bordering the town where we usually have our Kappa League meetings, I thought this free program (in existence for over a decade) was an excellent way to supplement what we already did with the high school juniors and seniors through the NBA Kappa League. The assertion was that if seniors chose to participate in this college club, it would alleviate some of the burden from the NBA Kappa League to change the monthly meeting focus to address college issues each session.

Since I knew one of the advisors of this college club, I discussed the idea with him, and he welcomed the participation of Kappa League seniors. At the October Kappa League meeting I discussed the partnership, emphasized the value of taking advantage of the program, and handed out flyers giving families the information they needed to begin attending. Although not presented as a mandated NBA Kappa League activity, the Kappa League juniors and seniors were expected to take advantage of the opportunity.

Observe. There was poor college club attendance by the Kappa Leaguers, and the young men who did attend were not particularly engaged as a result of what appeared to their unfamiliarity with the advisors, and the lack of personal attention and assistance due to the large group of students who attended the program each week.

In my efforts to encourage the Kappa Leaguers to attend the weekly college club sessions, I made a commitment to attend as well for about a month to provide the young men with a familiar face, and to help them make a smooth transition into the program. After attending for almost 2 months, and sending out weekly reminders to the Kappa Leaguers, I still observed poor attendance. Of the group of almost 20 high school seniors and juniors in the Kappa League, on average, about four to five attended at all during that time, and only about two to three were present on a consistent basis. Of those Kappa Leaguers who did attend, they seemed to lack engagement in the program, and their attention levels only appeared average.

Reflect. More would need to be done in the Kappa League sessions or in additional sessions to assist the high school seniors and their parents through the college application process. After talking to some of the Kappa Leaguers who attended the college club, they shared their modest interest was due in part to the large number of students who attended each week (from 50-100 per week). They reported that it was sometimes difficult to become fully engaged for that reason, and also because they were unfamiliar with a vast majority of the other high school student participants. Hearing their feedback led me to conclude that while some of the senior Kappa Leaguers might have been able to benefit from the college club, in order to reach most or all of them, support would have to be provided through the NBA Kappa League program. Since the parents were mainly responsible for transporting the young men to the college club, and they did not realize the benefits of the program either, I determined efforts to disseminate college information through the NBA Kappa League probably should target them (the parents) as well.

Cycle 4

      Plan. The plan was to assume the challenge of educating the Kappa Leaguers and parents about selecting colleges and the college application process. When the plan to encourage the Kappa Leaguers to attend the community college club did not go as planned, I met with the NBA Kappa League committee to decide if we wanted to assume the responsibility of disseminating the information about college to them ourselves. After agreeing it was part of our duty as mentors to help the high school seniors and their parents through his process, we then had to decide how we would go about fulfilling the role of assisting the young men and their parents in acquiring the college information. From our discussion, we decided that the best course of action might be to find a way to help the seniors during our monthly meetings as well as offering some form of assistance on an individual and/or small group basis outside of the monthly sessions.

      Act. The act was to established breakout sessions in monthly meetings to discuss college details with seniors and parents and be available for individual advisement. In our desire to meet the needs of the high school senior Kappa Leaguers, we wanted to be sure to maintain the integrity of the entire group of NBA Kappa Leaguers (regardless of grade level). As a result, we decided to have breakout sessions for the high schools seniors during each of the regular monthly meetings from November to June of the 2009/2010 school year. This allowed us to continue to provide our scheduled topic for the entire NBA Kappa league group while being able to offer special assistance and information to the seniors as well. The high school senior Kappa Leaguers were still able to be a part of most of the meeting, and a couple of my fraternity brothers would gather them together separately for about 30 minutes to discuss information about their college planning and application progress. It also gave them the opportunity to assist the young men in

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completing actual applications, and in addressing any of their questions about the college application process.

To fulfill the need to offer information about the college application process for parents, we sometimes had them join us for the 30 minute breakout sessions with their sons. The times we operated in this format, the attendance and participation was overwhelming. As a result of the amount of interest we received from both the high school seniors and their parents, we devoted three separate sessions for parents and young men to attend together. Two of the sessions occurred during the normal monthly meeting dates and times, and one session took place in December over the holiday break.

In addition to the group sessions for the young men and parents, a number of my fraternity brothers offered individual assistance by appointment. Two with experience working on the college level, volunteered their personal time to work with any young man and his family outside of the regular meetings to help them prepare their college applications, and to answer questions. Because there was little to no opportunity to work with the senior Kappa Leaguers individually at the monthly meetings, this option was invaluable and one many of the young man and families utilized.

Observe. Most of the young men and families took full advantage of the opportunities for group and individual assistance that were offered. Since the high school senior Kappa Leaguers were especially busy during their final year of high school, their attendance at the monthly sessions varied. Some months as many as 15 seniors attended, and other months as few as five were in attendance. However most months, at least 10 of the high school seniors were present and received assistance during the breakout sessions. During the sessions where we

invited parents to participate and receive information, a majority of the families were in attendance. The three occasions when we held entire meetings with the sole purpose of providing college information for parents, we boasted our largest numbers of young men and parents participating.

The number of senior Kappa Leaguers who took advantage of the individual college preparation support was difficult to measure directly. However, by way of reports from other fraternity brothers, about one-half to three-quarters of the young men and their families enlisted the support of those brothers who offered this service.

Reflect. A survey or interview would be beneficial to determine how successful the efforts were in providing information about college to the Kappa Leaguers and parents. After conducting consistent college preparation and information sessions from October to June, I was determined to figure out the best ways to capture the thoughts and feelings of the young men and their parents who participated. Since I already developed a survey measuring the overall effectiveness of the NBA Kappa League program (about a year earlier), I decided to restructure that same questionnaire. Instead of measuring the impact of the program in its entirety, I chose to create the survey to measure the efforts used throughout the previous 2 years in assisting the Kappa League seniors and their parents in the college information and application process.

Cycle 5

Plan. The plan was to administer a survey to the young men and parents assessing the success of the NBA Kappa League in helping inform and prepare the high school seniors for college. As the 2009-2010 school year was ending, and after months of providing group and individual college preparation support to the Kappa League seniors, they began to report their

college acceptances. In response to their positive feedback and similar comments shared by parents, it appeared that a great deal of appreciation was being given to the NBA Kappa League for their support of the young men. I decided that conducting a survey with the high school senior Kappa Leaguers and their parents would be a reasonable way to measure the degree of success that was really attributed to the work of the NBA Kappa League program.

Act. I personally administered questionnaires to the Kappa League high school seniors and their parents after they graduated high school. To help gather the most accurate information possible, I decided to wait until early to mid summer before I began to conduct the questionnaires. This was important because it allowed time for the young men to learn of their college acceptance status, and for them to make their decisions about what they were planning to do the following fall. While I informed the young men and their parents earlier in the year about my study, I began to arrange meetings to actually administer the questionnaires in July. Working around the families' schedules, I usually went to the homes of the high school seniors (who had become high school graduates) to administer the student and parent questionnaires. I explained the research study, received permission via the parental informed consent form, and addressed any questions the participants had. In most cases, I waited for the questionnaires to be completed, and collected the documents immediately from the Kappa Leaguer and parent. The questionnaire administering and collection process went on from July to late fall.

Observe. The young men and their parents were very cooperative, and most took the time to complete the surveys. One considerable advantage I was afforded during the survey process was my familiarity with my participants. Since I knew each of the Kappa Leaguers and parents very well, I encountered minimal resistance and most people were very cooperative.

Outside of the challenge of finding moments where the young men and parents were available at the same time, the survey process went smoothly. The process did take longer than I had expected since I was not able to conduct them in a meeting format where most people would have been in one place.

Reflect. Utilizing another form of data collection would help validate the research study. Although I was pleased with the questionnaire instrument that I used in the study, I realized another form of data collection would help strengthen the results. I immediately decided to use interviews to incorporate a qualitative research component and to help build upon the data from the surveys. I struggled to decide whether or not to interview just the Kappa Leaguers who had graduated from high school or to include their parents (like with the surveys). I also pondered the number of individual surveys to conduct, and when I should conduct them.

After discussing the interview process at length with my dissertation chair, he helped me decide upon a focus group format to use with a group of the Kappa League high school graduates who had moved on to college in the fall of 2010. We determined that interviewing them after one semester of college would provide a unique perspective of their experiences in the NBA Kappa league program. We also realized it would give the young men a chance to reflect on how the kappa league influenced them during their high school years as well as any ways the lessons may have transferred into their college experience as well.

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Data Analysis

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Data analysis is the process of organizing what has derived from the action research cycles so that the researcher can make sense of what has been learned (Glense, 2006). Once all of the student and parent survey instruments were administered and collected, I began the

process of compiling and analyzing that quantitative data based on the broad topical research questions. To analyze the quantitative data that I retrieved from the questionnaires, I used version 16.0 of SPSS. SPSS was the primary tool used in the process, and all of the data were entered and analyzed through this program. Frequency tables were created, and various cross-tabulations were run. By utilizing the SPSS system, I was able to create charts to facilitate the reporting of results as presented in Chapter 4.

To facilitate the compilation and analyses of my qualitative data, I first enlisted the help of a third party to transcribe the recorded focus group. Once this was done and I had the data in typed form, I established a book where I created codes, each associated with an abbreviation. These codes were created based on the various topics that arose from the questions I asked the focus group of former Kappa Leaguers after completing their first semester of college. I made efforts to develop the interview protocol for the focus group around specific research questions to help me remain focused on the research theme and to help facilitate the analysis process.

Once all of my research codes were established, I took the typed data responses (from the transcribed focus group) and assigned them the appropriate codes (in abbreviated form). I then used the codes to help identity any common themes that arose from the various responses of the young men in the focus group. By understanding the themes that arose most often, I was able to eliminate certain results that were less meaningful and focus more closely on the connections between the data elements that were most prevalent and seemed to be most relevant to the research questions. Finally, I drew comparisons and contrasts from the quantitative and qualitative results of the surveys and the qualitative results from the focus group.

Conclusion

Throughout my entire methodological approach, I made efforts to ensure that my research collection approaches were conducted in a manner that was deemed valid and as impartial as possible. Since I am passionate about my work with young Black males, I had to be cognizant of my possible research bias, and the potential of it impacting the results of the study. My bias was most evident in my desire to see results that supported the notion that the Black males in my program were more likely to perform better academically and were able to reach college, largely due to the support of the NBA Kappa League program. I hoped that the results of the student and parent surveys as well as from responses of the focus group yielded data to support this idea.

However, as an ethical researcher, I realized I had to be prepared to report my research findings as accurately as possible, even if they did not indicate that my program was benefitting the young men as much as I would have liked to believe. The challenge of this study was acknowledging the preconceived ideas that clouded my ability to enter the study with a completely open mind to allow the research study to develop naturally. As I worked harder to ignore some of my prior conclusions and hypotheses, I was able to allow the stages of action research to develop appropriately and direct my work in helping the Kappa Leaguers.

I also made efforts to address my biases by forming my survey questions and interview protocol to generate the most accurate and objective responses possible. In reviewing my surveys and interviews from past studies, I sometimes found myself leading the respondents, or infusing too much of my personal thoughts and views. I became more conscious of this as I developed the surveys and focus group questions for this study, and did a better job of allowing

the subjects' actual thoughts to be shared without my personal views directing participants toward certain answers.

Finally, I made efforts in my methodology to utilize triangulation as much as possible in my study. Adopting a mixed-methods approach was one primary means of ensuring the concept of triangulation was used. The quantitative approaches I employed included surveying the young men in the program, as well as their parents. It might have been acceptable to only solicit the thoughts of the young men; however, including the parent perspective provided another level of validity to my study. The main qualitative approaches I used to help vary my data collection strategies included observations of the high school senior Kappa Leaguers over a 2-year time period, and conducting a focus group of former Kappa Leaguers who graduated high school and who selected different types of colleges to attend. I did my best to avoid looking at my quantitative and qualitative methods in isolation of one another, but allowed the work in one to inform my approach to the other. In the end, this blending of strategies helped create a more complete study increasing the validity of my results.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The methodology chapter provided detailed information about student and parent participants of this study and the process used to gather the data from them. It also described the specific steps the researcher embarked upon during the course of the study to help extract the most accurate information to address the research questions. Proceeding from the methodology, the findings chapter will provide results that were generated through quantitative and qualitative methods and align them with the original questions this study sought to answer. The degree to which the results meet the goals and purpose of the study will be uncovered by the conclusion of this section.

The researcher acknowledges that the nature of this study, and limited number of subjects from whom data was collected will serve to inform program effectiveness with respect to addressing the research questions. No measures of statistical significance were applied. All findings are reported in terms of actual frequencies.

High School Performance-Student Perspective

The first research question sought to measure the impact of the NBA Kappa League program on its participants during their high school years leading up to college. Research question 1 stated, *In what ways can participation the New Brunswick Alumni Kappa League mentoring program benefit African American teenage males during their high school years?*

This question was posed to determine the degree to which the 2010 high school graduates might attribute their participation in the NBA Kappa League to making a positive difference in

their lives while they were in high school. More specifically, the focus was connected largely to their academic performance and the degree of effort they put forth in high school. The responses from three particular survey questions from the Kappa League students (Appendix B) and three survey questions from the Kappa League parents (Appendix C) provided useful information to support this question related to the academic benefits of the program. Written responses from one of the open-ended questions on both the student and parent surveys also rendered meaningful data of a qualitative nature. Finally, responses from a sample of the young men who participated in the student survey, given in a focus group interview, also rendered qualitative information regarding the impact of Kappa League on their high school academics.

Quantitatively, question numbers 6, 7, and 8 on the Kappa League Student Questionnaire provided relevant feedback to address the first research question. The responses were collected using a Likert-type scale with the following choices: 4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree. The Kappa League participants were asked to respond to the following: "As a result of participating in Kappa League…"

Student Survey Question # 6)   I focused more on my grades and academics.

Student Survey Question # 7)   My grades started to improve.

Student Survey Question # 8)   I became a more confident student.

The Kappa League student responses for Question # 6, "I focused more on my grades and academics," are illustrated in Table 1. Of the Kappa League students (n=16) who participated in the survey, all of them either agreed or strongly agreed to Question # 6. More specifically, nine of the young men agreed that they focused more on their grades and academics in high school as

a result of participating in the Kappa League program, and seven of the respondents strongly agreed.

Table 1

Student Question 6
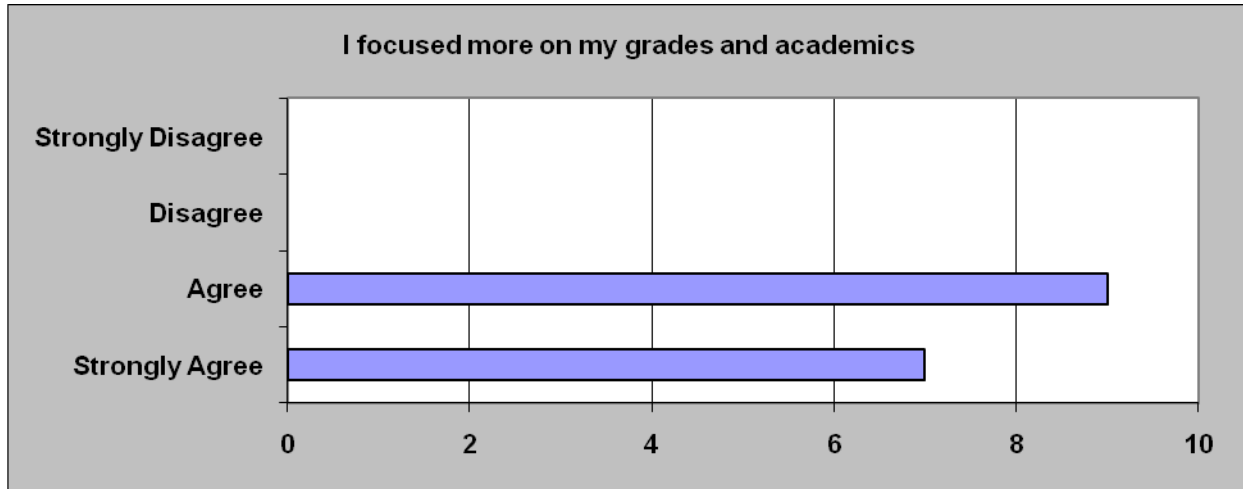
The responses to Question # 7, "My grades started to improve," are reflected in Table 2. Similar to the responses for Question # 6, all of the young men responded to Question # 7 by only selecting "agree" or "strongly agree." In addition to the young men reporting that they focused more on their grades as a result of participating in the NBA Kappa League program (Table 1), most respondents revealed that their grades started to improve in some way as well (Table 2). The number of young men who agreed and strongly agreed to this question was reversed from Question # 6. For question # 7, nine young men strongly agreed, and seven agreed. More specifically, while all of the young men seemed to identify with some degree of grade improvement, more of the respondents emphasized they "strongly agreed" than those who replied with "agree."

Table 2

Student Question 7

My Grades Started to Improve
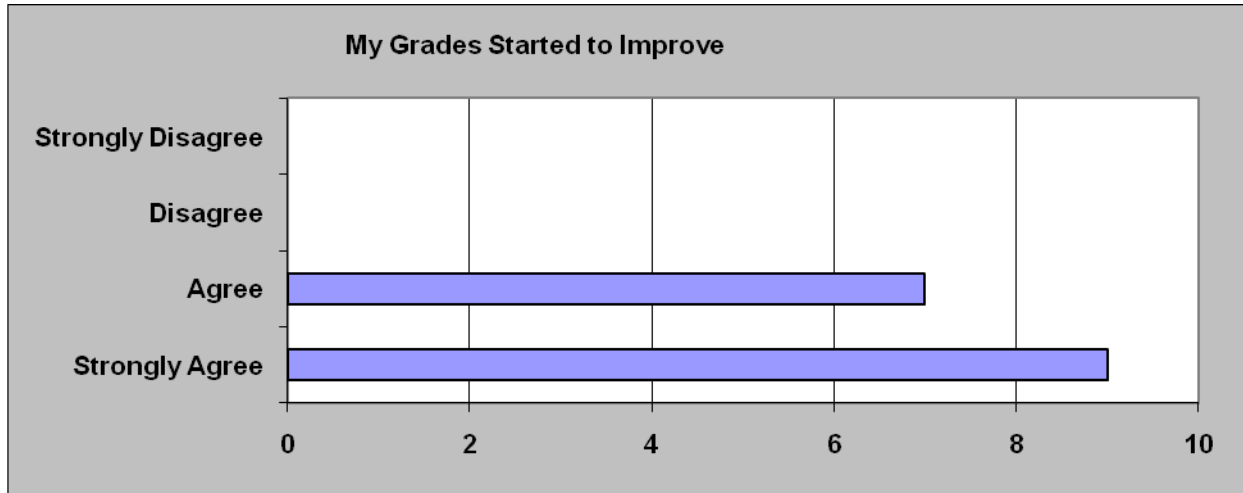
Finally, the responses from Question # 8, "I became a more confident student," can be found in Table 3. While the student responses for Question # 8 also fell solely into the two categories of agree and strongly agree, the balance between the two was not as close as the results of the previous two questions. While the number of young men who chose to agree and strongly agree about focusing more on their grades and their grades actually improving was relatively even given the sample size, when asked about their confidence as a student, 13 of the 16 Kappa Leaguers strongly agreed they became more confident students as a result of Kappa League.

Table 3

Student Question 8

I Became a More Confident Student

Strongly Disagree	
Disagree	
Agree	3
Strongly Agree	13

(x-axis: 0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14)
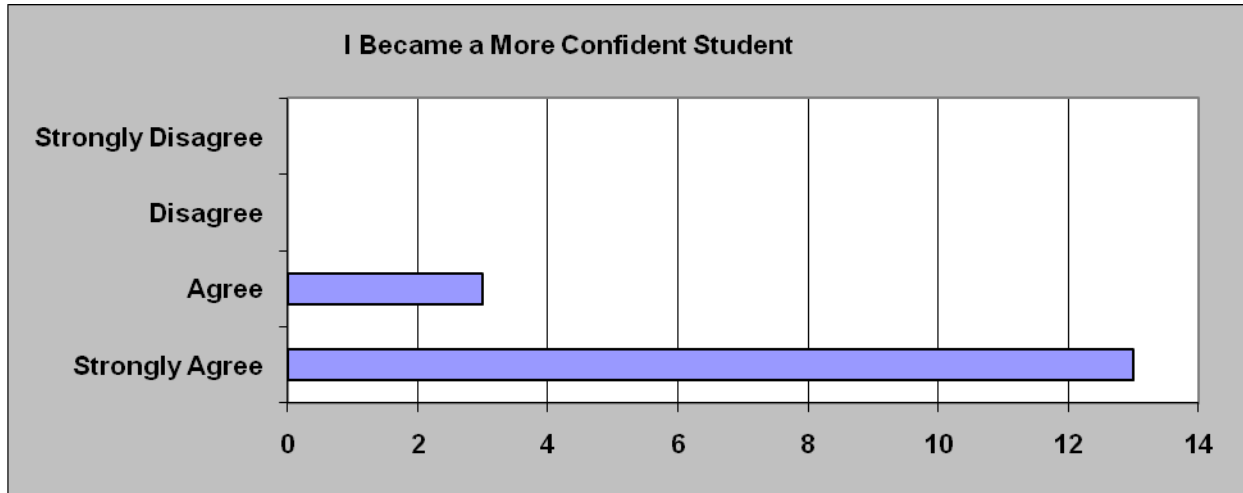
The three Kappa League student survey questions that were just reported (items 6, 7, and 8) were the most likely to yield results related to the impact of the Kappa League program on the students' academic performance in high school. The fact that all of the responses for the three questions fell into either the "agree" or "strongly agree" categories overwhelmingly suggested that the NBA Kappa League did have a positive academic influence on the participants.

To help support the results of the quantitative data, qualitative data were also collected from the surveys that the young men and the parents completed. The first open-ended question (Question # 23) on the Kappa League student survey supported the results of questions 6, 7, and 8 about the ways their academic performance was enhanced by being mentored through the NBA Kappa League. A vast majority of the written answers, like the quantitative responses, supported the notion that some aspect of their academic practices was enhanced as a result of being in the NBA Kappa League. Question # 23 asked the students: "How successful was the Kappa League in helping you become a better student in high school?"

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Some of the written responses from the young men included the following:

Student-3 stated:

The Kappa League helped me to focus on my grades more and taught me what I had to do to improve my grades.

Student-5 stated:

The Kappa League was real successful in making me a better student. Since I've been going there I had my head screwed on tighter and started to work harder.

Student-6 stated:

The brothers held us accountable for our academics by reviewing our report cards and by providing incentives for us to succeed. So that I wouldn't be ashamed on report card review day I made an effort to complete all assignments in school and to turn them in on time. I also focused harder when preparing for exams.

Student-9 stated:

The Kappa League was successful because it helped me open my eyes to the difficulties Black students go through in school.

Student-10 stated:

The Kappa League was greatly successful in helping me become a better student in high school because even though I already understood that I needed to work hard in order to be successful, they gave me the motivation to keep going and not to give up when something seemed difficult.

Student-15 stated:

The environment of the Kappa League as well as the responsibilities given by the Kappa League, allowed me to grow out of complacency that plagued my first two years of high school.

In addition to the qualitative results taken directly from the survey, additional qualitative data came from a focus group made up of a sample of the young men who completed the survey. While the surveys were conducted primarily during the two months after the young men

graduated high school and before they began college; the focus group was conducted with six of the young men after they had completed their first semester of college. Much of these results, like the previous responses from the young men, supported the notion that participation in the NBA Kappa League had a positive impact in their lives, particularly academically, during their high school years.

One of the first questions posed in the focus group paralleled Question 23 of the student survey. The participants were asked the following: "Did your participation in the NBA Kappa League program impact your academic performance during high school in any way? If so, explain."

Below are some of the responses from the young men:

Student-1 stated:

It made me realize how important it was cause when I first started high school I really didn't care as much. I didn't even know if I wanted to go to college or anything, so I was just in high school, just being in high school. But, being in the program made me realize the importance of being successful. It was because, like, I didn't see myself like going to college, in freshman year when I was starting out in high school. So, then being in Kappa League and being around the other mentors to see how their lives turned out, like all of them being doctors, businessmen, and stuff like that, it pushed me to go harder in high school so that when I get out into the real world, I would have what some of you guys have.

Student-2 stated:

The Kappa League, it taught me like to be mannerable at times and like in class, in high school. Like coming to class early, saying hello to my teachers greeting them at all times, talking to them after class, and it helped me in college too. But in high school, the Kappa League showed me that also the little things do count, so you do have to do those things to even like get an extra grade or they might help you out to show you different things in the subject or something, like tricks or any of that stuff. The Kappa League also kind of helped me with my introductions of myself because you have to be confident when you first introduce yourself. It puts a certain image of you in people's minds. So you have to be able

to present yourself confidently to your teachers or else they are going to judge you negatively.

Student-3 stated:

I think the little report card checks kind of helped me a little bit because it kind of scared me because I didn't want to be embarrassed to get like bad grades. So I mean, it kind of like forced me to be a little more on top of what I was doing and try to keep my grades up more.

High School Performance-Parent Perspective

Information about the impact of mentoring on high school performance collected from the parents of the young men when participating in this study also addressed the first research question. Like the quantitative and qualitative information from the student survey questions that related to the benefits of NBA Kappa League participation on high school performance, similar feedback was uncovered after analyzing the results of the parent surveys. Quantitatively, question numbers 5, 6, and 7 on the parent survey (See Appendix C) also provided relevant feedback to address the first research question except it offered an adult perspective. Like the student surveys, the parent responses were collected using a Likert-type scale with the same choices: 4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree. Also resembling the student surveys, the parent participants were asked to respond to the following: "As a result of participating in Kappa League…"

Parent Survey Question # 5)   My son focused more on his grades and academics.

Parent Survey Question # 6)   My son's grades started to improve.

Parent Survey Question # 7)   My son became a more confident student.

The parent responses for Question # 5, "My son focused more on his grades and academics," are illustrated in Table 4. An almost equal number of parents reported that they "agree" that the NBA Kappa League program helped their sons focus more on their grades and academics as did the students who self-reported their thoughts as highlighted in the previous section of results. Eight parents selected the option "agree" (as shown in Table 4) and nine students indicated the same (as shown in Table 1). However, what differed among the parent and student reporting were the categories where the rest of the responses (other than "agree") fell. While the remainder of the student responses all resulted in the "strongly agree" option, parent responses fell into both the "strongly agree" and "disagree" categories.

Four parent participants responded with "strongly agree" and combined with those who indicated they "agree," the total number of parents supporting the idea that their sons focused more on grades and academics as a result of Kappa League, was 12 out of 14. Unlike all of the young men who either agreed or strongly agreed that they focused more on their grades and academics as a result of Kappa League, two parents did not feel their sons focused more on those areas and opted instead to select "disagree" in response to that question.

Table 4

Parent Question 5

My Son Focused More On His Grades and Academics

	0	2	4	6	8	10
Strongly Disagree						
Disagree	2					
Agree					8	
Strongly Agree			4			
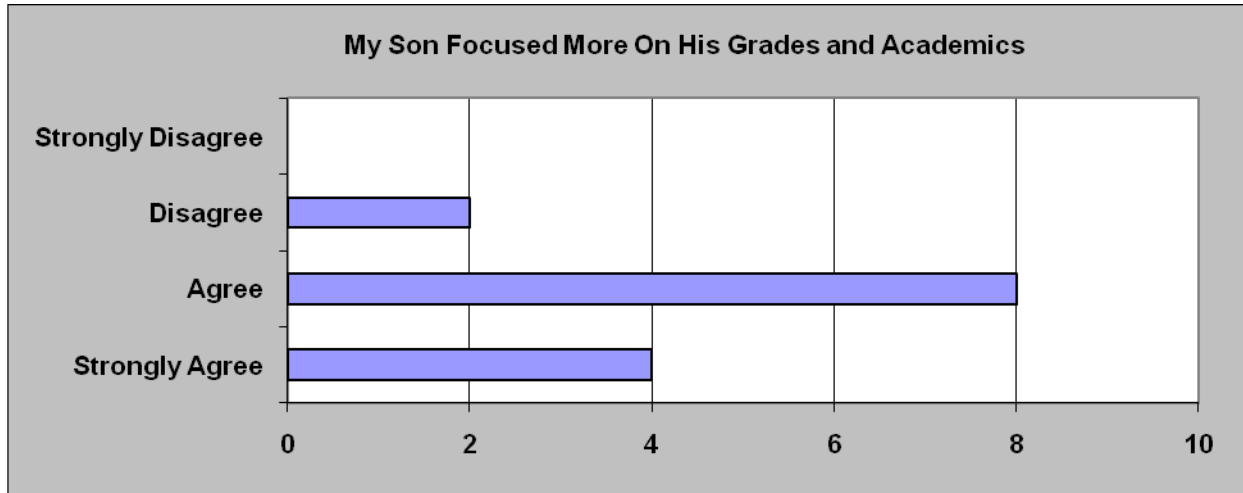
Similar to the results of question # 5 on the parent survey, question # 6 was also related to

grades as the parents were asked to respond to the following statement: "As a result of

participating in Kappa League…"

Parent Survey Question # 6)   My son's grades started to improve.

A breakdown of the responses for question # 6 is located in Table 5. Question # 6 yielded

the exact same results from the parents as did question # 5. Although two parents did not agree

that their sons' grades improved as a result of their participation in Kappa League, a majority of

the parents (12 in all) did choose to either "agree" or "strongly agree" with that statement. More

specifically, eight parents responded that they agreed, and four strongly agreed.

Table 5

Parent Question 6

My Son's Grades Started to Improve

Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	2
Agree	8
Strongly Agree	4

Scale: 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10
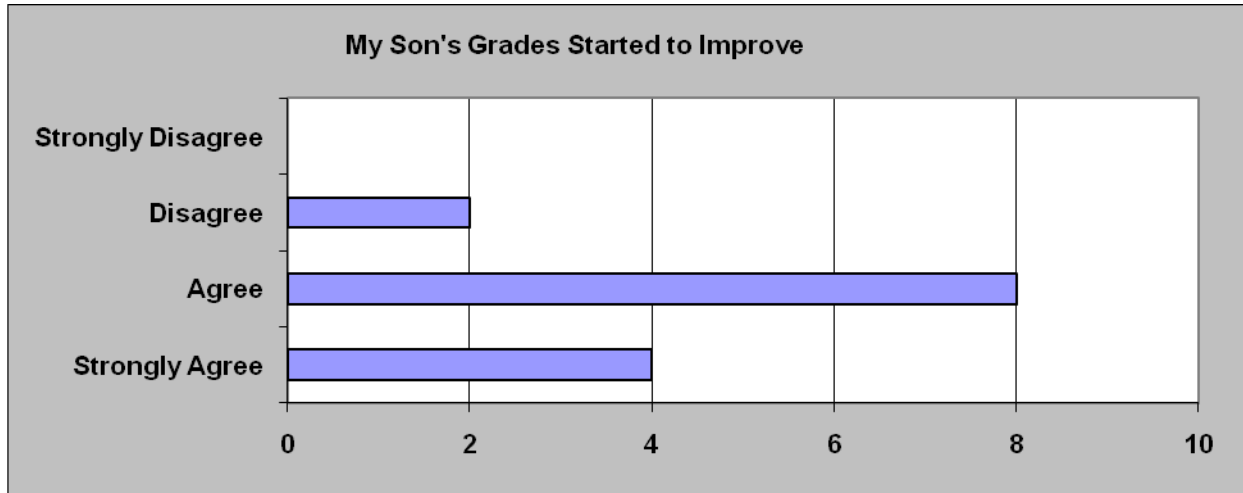
The responses for question # 7, "My son became a more confident student," can be seen in Table 6. The results of questions 5 and 6 indicated that some parents did not feel their sons focused more on their grades or improved their grades from their Kappa League affiliation. However, for question # 7, all parents reported that their sons became more confident students. In fact, as seen in Table 6, almost twice as many parents confirmed their belief with "strongly agree" (nine) compared to "agree" (five).

Table 6

Parent Question 7

My Son Became A More Confident Student

Strongly Disagree	
Disagree	
Agree	5
Strongly Agree	9

Horizontal axis: 0 2 4 6 8 10
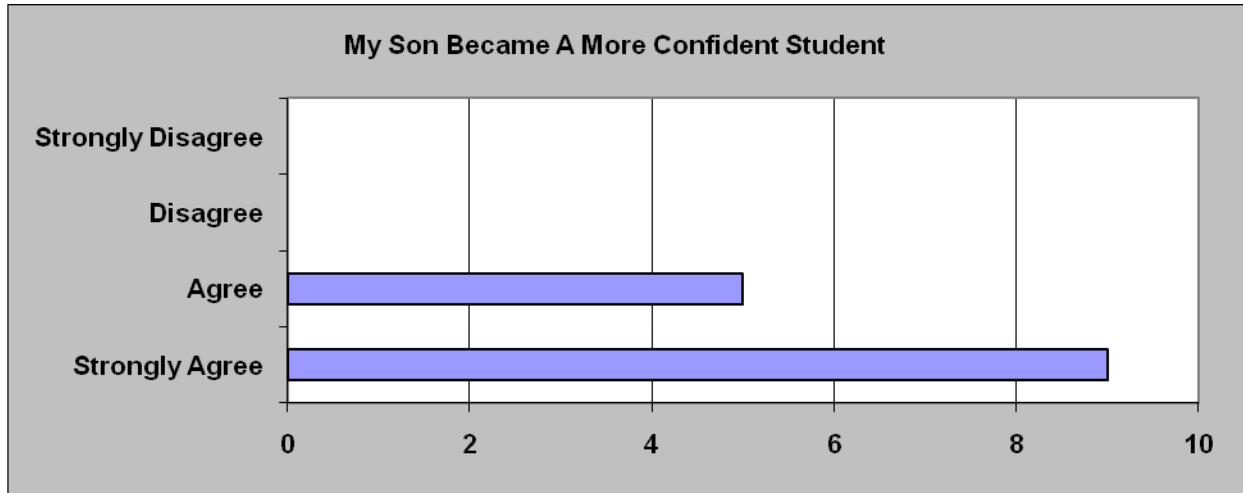
Qualitative data from the parents to support the quantitative results of their responses to survey questions 5, 6, and 7 came from their first open-ended question (Question # 21) on the parent survey. Question # 21 provided information from the parent participants to further support the results of the three Likert-type responses on ways their son's academic performance was enhanced by being mentored through the NBA Kappa League program. A vast majority of the written answers, like the quantitative responses, supported the notion that some aspect of their son's academic practices was enhanced as a result of being a member of the NBA Kappa League. Question #21 asked the students: "How successful was the Kappa League in helping your son become a better student in high school?" Some of the written responses from the parents included the following:

Parent-3 stated:

Kappa League challenged my son to be competitive academically. The program appealed to his competitive nature and got him excited about getting good grades.

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Parent-5 stated:

I feel the Kappa League played a very important part in my son's life as a high school student. They were always encouraging him and exposing him to different aspects of careers and life.

Parent-8 stated:

The Kappa League held my son accountable for his grades by making him present his report card each term and explained where he may have gone wrong. They also offered assistance with the Trio math and science summer camp which was extremely helpful.

Parent-13 stated:

He gained confidence which helped him to negotiate any questions/issues with his teachers. He also realized that a lot of people expected great things from him.

Parent-14 stated:

I believe my son maintained his good grades because of the Kappa League. The Kappa League helped reinforce the values of education my husband and I have also explained to our son.

High School Behavior

While the Kappa Leaguers' academic performance and improvements during their high school years were analyzed closely, the program's influence on their behavior was examined as well. Albeit through only one Likert-type survey question (on both the student and parent surveys) and one question was posed to the student focus group, behavior in high school also seemed to be an area where the young men reported the NBA Kappa League served them well.

Question # 5 on the Kappa League student survey and question # 4 on the Kappa League parent survey each solicited feedback to determine whether or not respondents felt the NBA Kappa League experience improved the behavior of the young men in any way. On the student

survey, the young men were asked to respond to the following: "As a result of participating in Kappa League…"

Student Survey Question # 5)   My behavior in school improved.

Similarly, on the parent survey, respondents were asked: "As a result of participating in Kappa League…"

Parent Survey Question # 4)   My son's behavior in school improved.

The results of student question # 5 are illustrated in Table 7, and the results of parent question # 4 are illustrated in Table 8. The Kappa League student and parent responses both yielded overwhelmingly positive results that somewhat mirrored one another. The results of the young men's responses are reflected in Table 7, and the parent responses are reflected in Table 8. The tables being placed one after the other, helps to further illustrate the similar outcomes with every student and parent either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the NBA Kappa League impacted the young men's behavior in high school. However, it also displays a slight variation in the responses with just a few more parents (seven) than students (six) reporting that they strongly agree as opposed to agree.

Table 7

Student Question 5

My Behavior In School Improved

Strongly Disagree	
Disagree	
Agree	(bar to ~10)
Strongly Agree	(bar to 6)

Scale: 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12

Table 8

Parent Question 4

My Son's Behavior In School Improved

Strongly Disagree	
Disagree	
Agree	(bar to 7)
Strongly Agree	(bar to 7)

Scale: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
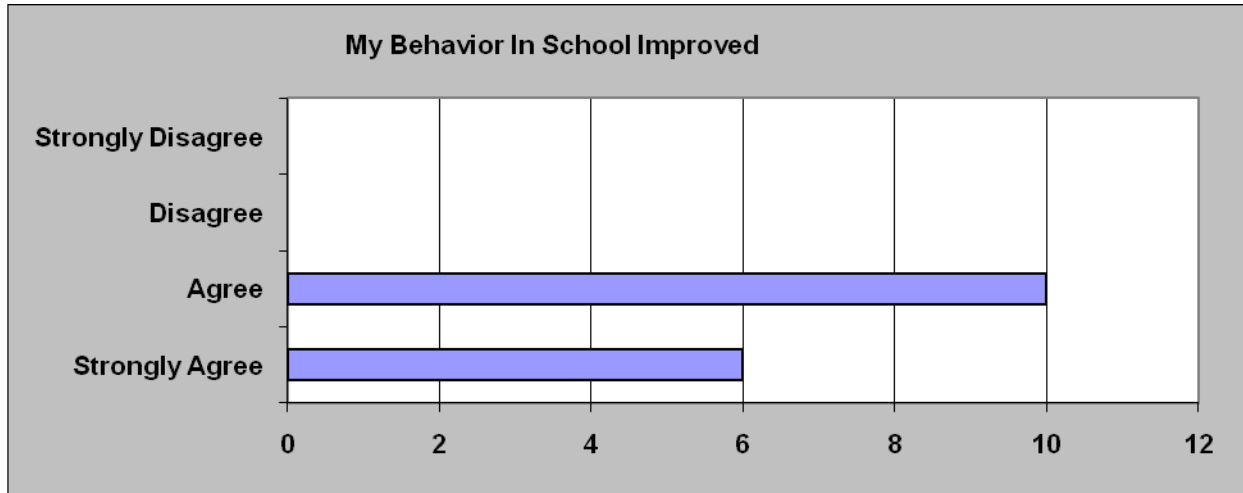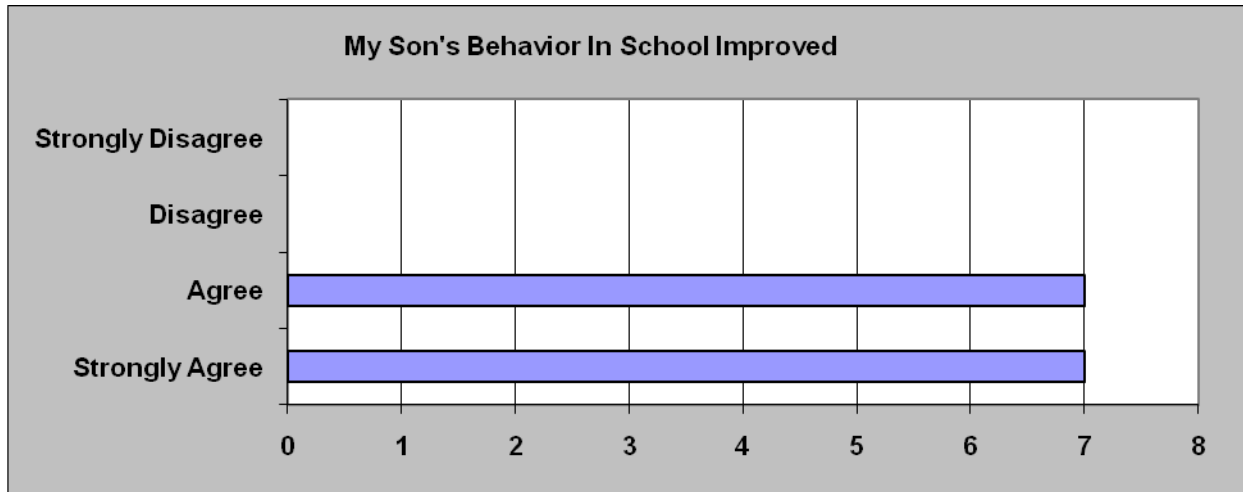
In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative feedback taken from the young men who participated in the focus group session supported the survey results indicating the NBA Kappa League had a positive influence on behavior of the participants during high school. The question posed to the young men in the focus group asked the following:

Sometimes young men in high school, Black males in particular, get into trouble, whether it's detention, or getting into a fight or insubordination, yelling at the teacher, or just causing chaos. Or getting suspended or expelled, you know. Have any of you guys dealt with that in school, particularly high school, since you've been in the program? Have any of those things happened, and if so, did you learn anything from it as a result of Kappa League? If not, did participating in Kappa League influence you to stay away from those things?

Representative responses follow:

Student-1 stated:

Yea. I think to me, I remember my senior year I got suspended for two days for cursing at a teacher. Bu the Kappa League showed me that one thing about me; I always have a short temper. So the Kappa League, it showed me how to handle it better and how like to go the right route, like you shouldn't curse out teachers.

Student-2 stated:

I didn't have a short temper or anything, but when teachers, when they would like get on my nerves or anything, I would have a smart mouth and I would say something that you just wouldn't like. It wouldn't be like bad, a curse word or anything, but I'd just say something that you would not like and I would be kicked out of the class. And coming to Kappa League, they showed me like to just sometimes just deal with it. If you don't like what's coming out of the teacher's mouth, just calm down, you know, talk to somebody else about it or talk to them about it. Like just don't say nothing rude or anything to get kicked out.

Student-3 stated:

It just showed me how to take it. Like I had a problem with authority, too. Like when I was younger, I ain't like to be told what to do at all. I didn't like being told what to do at all. So, being in the Kappa League, it like helped me become like nice. Even still to this day I don't like being told what to do but I accept it more, right. Because I realize that you're not always going to be in control of everything. So that's it.

Student-4 stated:

I guess in my younger years, I was kind of notorious for having problems with authority. Like, yeah, a lot of problems, cursing out teachers, fighting, and stuff like that, but the Kappa League, just the men in Kappa League were real positive, you know. I mean, the older I got, too, that stuff just naturally just got kind of silly to me. Like by the time I was in high school, I hadn't fought for a long time, but I also think that it just helped having an environment where I was allowed to grow like that, you know, because if I wasn't in Kappa League on those Saturdays, I would have probably just been home, you know, watching TV… not really learning anything. But seeing you go for your doctorate, Dr. Booker, who is a doctor, like you know, because of all these men who were there, like they treated me with such respect, and I got to learn to respect older people more, including my teachers. I think that was a really important thing that I learned from Kappa League, if not one of the most important things I learned from Kappa League.

Measuring possible improvement in the behavior of the Kappa League participants was not the main focus of this study and was not explored in detail. Greater emphasis was placed on unearthing more academic benefits and those related to college preparation. However, since the student and parent survey results reflected positive changes in school behavior because of Kappa League participation, the results were shared as part of the analysis on school improvement.

Pursuing and Applying to College-Student Perspective

The results of the first research question addressed in this study described the academic impact the NBA Kappa League program made in the lives of the young men during their high school years from the student and parent viewpoints. The second research question addressed the Kappa League's influence on the young men's choices to pursue and apply to college. The second research question asked the following: *How might participation in the New Brunswick Alumni Kappa League mentoring program influence African American teenage males to pursue and apply to college?*

Like the results presented earlier in the chapter to address research question 1, research question 2 was also supported by quantitative and qualitative data. Whether through Likert-type or open-ended survey questions, or focus group responses, each data collection method was designed to help discover if the NBA Kappa League was successful in encouraging the young men to take the necessary steps to make college a reality. Survey responses from the students and parents provided quantitative and qualitative results, while additional qualitative results stemmed from the young men who took part in the focus group. The quantitative and qualitative results from the Kappa League students will be described in detail, followed by the quantitative and qualitative results from the Kappa League parents.

Question numbers 11, 12, 13, and 14 on the Kappa League Student Questionnaire provided quantitative feedback to address the second research question. The responses were collected using a Likert-type scale with the following choices: 4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree. The Kappa League participants were asked to respond to the following: "As a result of participating in Kappa League…"

Student Survey Question # 11)   I developed a greater interest in attending college.

Student Survey Question # 12)   I was encouraged to apply to college.

Student Survey Question # 13)   I received help researching different colleges.

Student Survey Question # 14)   I received help going through the college application process.

The Kappa League student responses for question # 11 "I developed a greater interest in attending college," are illustrated in Table 9. All of the young men who responded to question # 11 either chose "agree" or "strongly agree" that the Kappa League helped increase their interest in attending college. Among those young men who responded positively to this question, a majority of them seemed very convinced about the impression the Kappa League program made on them in this area. When looking at the responses more closely in Table 9, three young men agreed, while 13 indicated that they strongly agreed that they developed a greater interest in college from their participation in Kappa League. None of the young men selected the choices "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

Table 9

Student Question 11
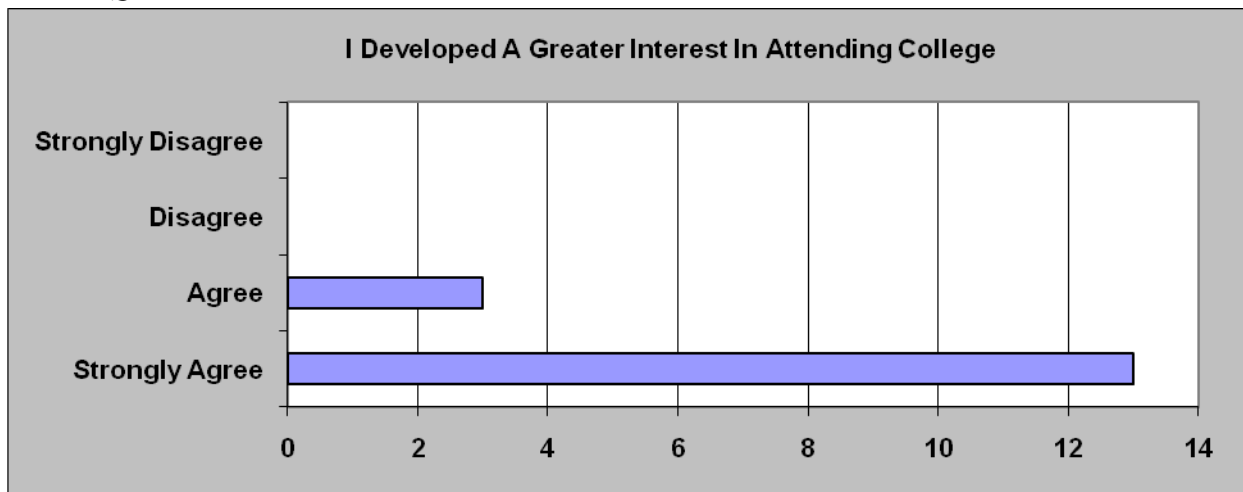
The Kappa League student responses for question # 12 "I was encouraged to apply to college," are illustrated in Table 10. Like the data from question # 11, the Kappa League student responses for question # 12 resulted in identical numbers of those who agreed and those who strongly agreed. Again, all of the young men answered affirmatively, supporting the idea that

based on their experiences in the Kappa League program, they were encouraged to apply to

college. As seen in Table 10, three young men responded with "agree," while 13 responded with

"strongly agree."

Table 10

Student Question 12
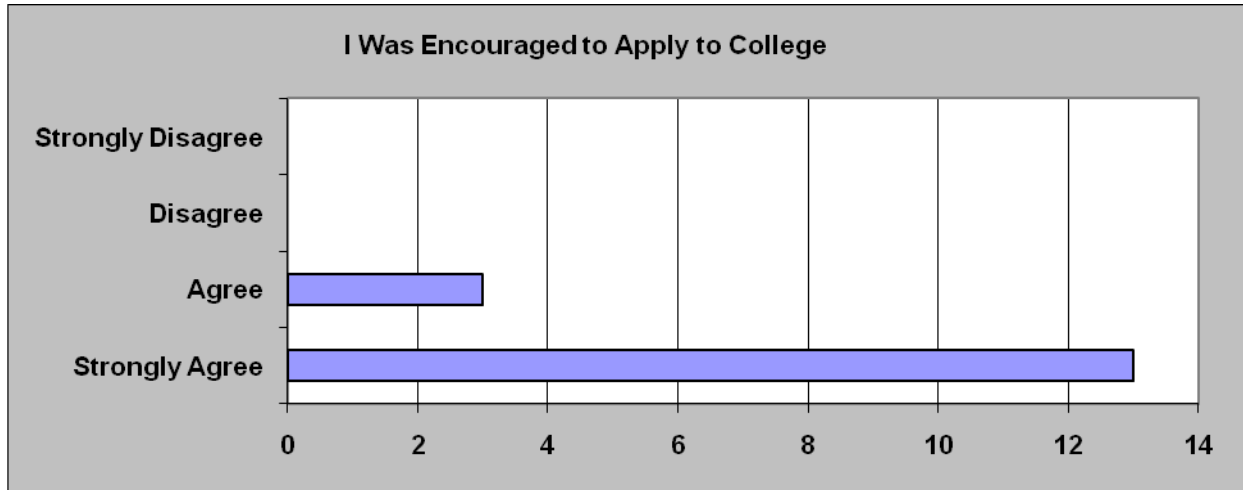
The Kappa League student responses for question # 13 "I received help researching

different colleges," are illustrated in Table 11. The purpose of this question was to help

determine how successful the Kappa League was in exposing the young men to a variety of

college options as well as helping them learn about those various schools in the process. Unlike

the responses for the previous two questions, the data generated from the Kappa League students

for question # 13 yielded similar yet slightly different results.

As seen in Table 11, while a vast majority of the young men agreed in some way that

they received help researching colleges (15 in all), there was a much more even distribution

among those who selected "agree" (eight) compared to "strongly agree" (seven) than evidenced

in the previous two questions. Additionally, one of the respondents opted to disagree to this question while none of the young men selected "strongly disagree."

Table 11

Student Question 13
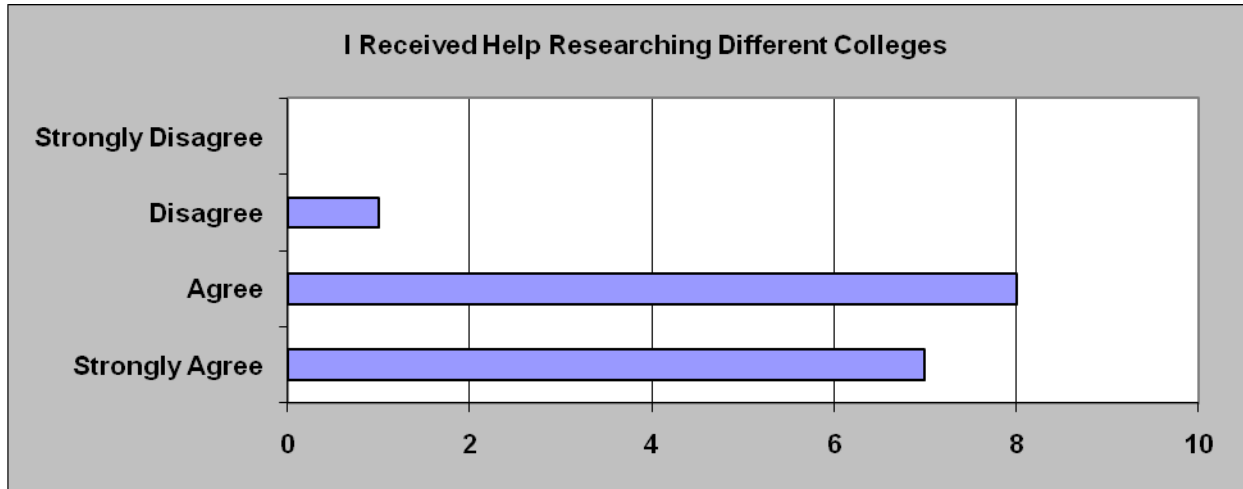
The Kappa League student responses for question # 14, "I received help going through the college application process," are illustrated in Table 12. The Kappa League students overwhelmingly responded to question # 14 with "agree" and "strongly agree" (15 total responses) as in the other questions related to pursuing and applying to college. Most of the young men selected "strongly agree," (11); four selected "agree;" and by far the smallest amount of respondents did not report receiving help applying to college and selected "disagree" (one). None of the respondents selected the option "strongly disagree."

Table 12

Student Question 14

I Received Help Going Through the College Application Process
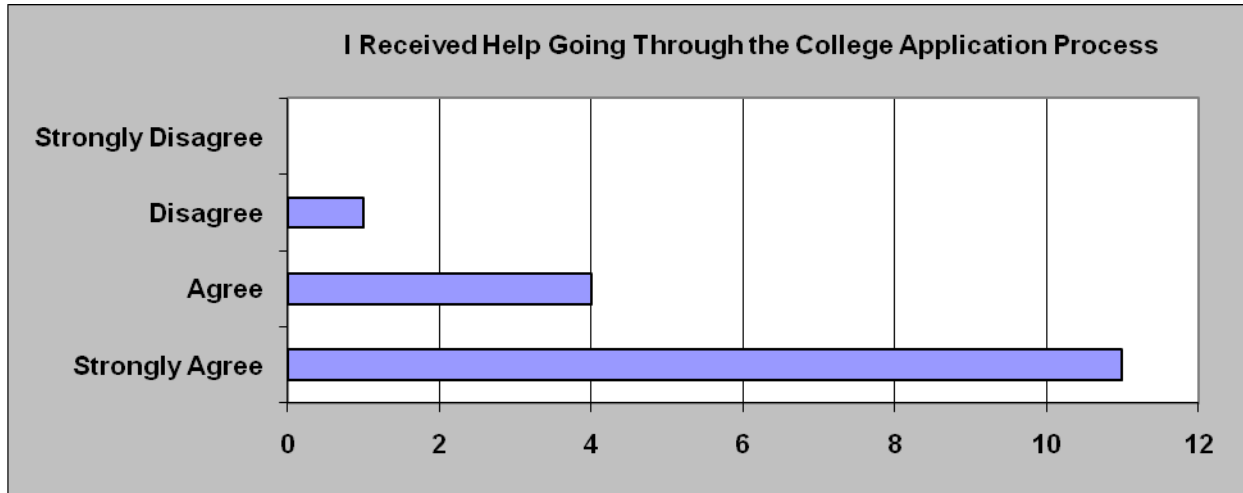
To help inform the quantitative results provided in Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12, qualitative

data from the Kappa League student survey also offered insightful commentary about the

program's success in preparing the young men for college. Question # 24, an open-ended

question, generated feedback supporting the responses to the Likert-type questions 11, 12, 13,

and 14. Question # 24 asked the students, "How successful was the Kappa League in helping you

prepare for college? Explain."

Some of the written responses from the young men included the following:

Student-2 stated:

They helped my whole college process from applications to questions and they
offered as much time as needed to help me 100%.

Student-5 stated:

I'll have to say that if it wasn't for the Kappa League I really wouldn't have gone
straight to college from high school.

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Student-6 stated:

The Kappa League provided tons of detailed information regarding the college application process, financial aid, and how to begin and complete the application process. We had many college meetings prior to our senior year of high school therefore we knew what was expected of us to complete our senior year.

Student-10 stated:

The Kappa League was successful in many ways in preparing me for college, because they answered all of my questions pertaining to applying, as well as helping me to receive a scholarship.

Student-11 stated:

The Kappa League was extremely helpful for preparing for college because not only did it give me more information and guidance on the application process than my high school, but it also helped me gain community service and work experience to make me more appealing to colleges.

Student-14 stated:

The mentors kept me on the right timeline during the application process, and offered me an opportunity to receive a scholarship which can help with college financially. So it was very successful.

Student-15 stated:

I think Kappa League really made sure we were prepared every step of the way during the college process. The expectation for us to go to college pushed me and others to do better.

In addition to the qualitative responses from question # 24 on the Kappa League student survey, the responses to one of the focus group questions provided rich information about the young men's perception of the role Kappa League had in them pursing and applying to college. During the focus group, I asked the young men the following: "You are all enrolled in college, and completed your first semester. Were you interested in pursuing college before joining Kappa League? If so, did we support you in

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helping that to become a reality? If not, what did we do that helped make college of

interest to you that led you to applying?"

Some of the young men's responses are as follows:

Student-1 stated:

The Kappa League helped. My mom, she was intent on me going to college, I didn't really have a choice. I mean, I wanted to go, but she was going to make sure. The Kappa League, it really helped me like get my stuff in order to actually go through the application process and the scholarship and a bunch of other stuff like organizing everything I needed to get into school. So they helped.

Student-2 stated:

The Kappa League showed me that you have to be real sometimes. You can't always have these dreams of going to these big schools, because if you would have asked me three years ago, four years ago, freshman year, if asked what school I was going to, I would have said I'm going to play basketball for Duke. I might have also said Penn State or Florida, and I'm at Virginia State. So they actually showed you that you've got to be realistic, and first of all, get your grades in order. If you don't have a 4.0 or a high GPA, you might not be mentally ready for those kinds of schools yet. So yeah, it showed me to be real in choosing schools.

Student-3 stated:

It probably wasn't until my junior year that I realized I wanted to go to college, probably because of my family. On my mother's side and stepfather's side of the family, a lot of the men in the family don't do anything. They're either locked up or doing whatever. So then me and my mom had a talk and she was like, college would just be the best option for you because you don't want to end up like this uncle or that cousin, or even my biological father I didn't want to end up like. So then dealing with the Kappa League, it just helped, especially the help I've gotten during the process of going to college. Like with telling me how I should go about applying, getting my letters of recommendation and all that stuff. That's pretty much what got me into college. That's one thing I regret, not starting early and waiting until my junior year to decide that.

Pursuing and Applying to College -Parent Perspective

In addition to being supported by student results, data from the Kappa League parents also addressed the second research question related to pursuing and applying to college. Like the student results, the parent results stemmed from quantitative and qualitative research collection methods. Quantitative data were based on how the parents responded to questions 10, 11, 12, and 13 on the Kappa League Parent Questionnaire. Qualitative responses also came from the parent survey, but were from question # 22, one of the open-ended questions.

Like the other parts of the research study, the quantitative responses were collected using a Likert-type scale with the following choices: 4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree. To collect the quantitative data, the Kappa League parents were asked to respond to the following: "As a result of participating in Kappa League…"

Parent Survey Question # 10)   My son developed a greater interest in college.

Parent Survey Question # 11)   My son was encouraged to apply to college.

Parent Survey Question # 12)   My son received help researching various colleges.

Parent Survey Question # 13)   My son received help applying to college.

The results from the Kappa League parent responses for question # 10, "My son developed a greater interest in college," and question # 11, "My son was encouraged to apply to college," turned out to be identical. The parents reported that they either agreed or strongly agreed with each question and most of the responses fell into the "strongly agree" category in response to those questions. As seen in Table 13, four parents responded that they "agree" that

their sons developed a greater interest in college as a result of their participation in Kappa League while 10 indicated that they "strongly agree." Likewise, as shown in Table 14, about four parents responded that they "agree" that participation in Kappa League encouraged their sons to apply to college while 10 indicated "strongly agree" to the same. Both tables also reflect the lack of responses (0) in the categories disagree and strongly disagree.

Table 13

Parent Question 10
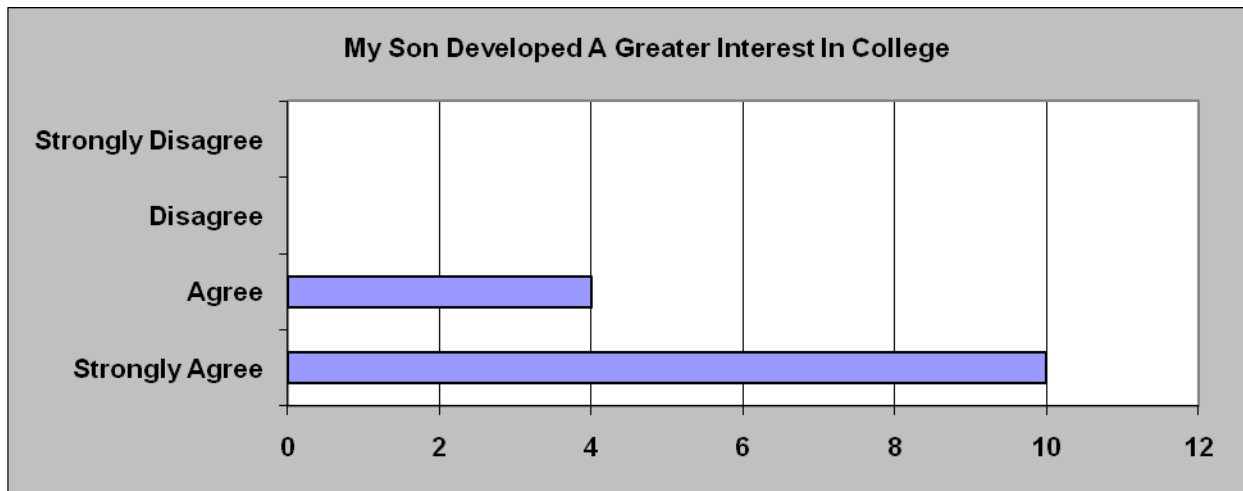
Table 14

Parent Question 11
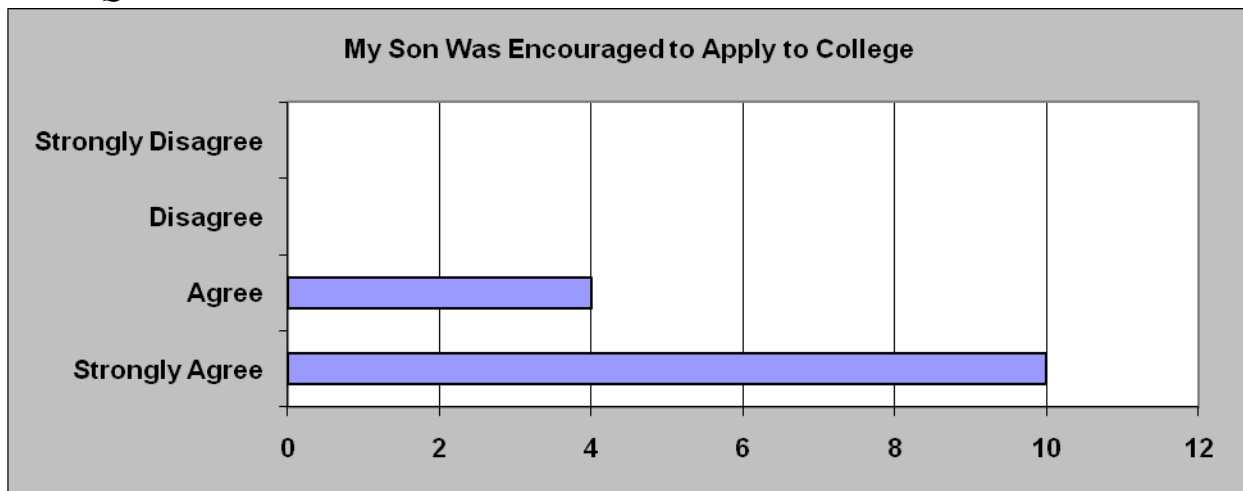
The Kappa League parent responses for question # 12, "My son received help researching various colleges," are illustrated in Table 15. Like the previous two questions related to the Kappa League influencing the young men to pursue and apply to college, a large portion of the parents chose "agree" and "strongly agree." A combined 12 parents selected these two categories over the other choices. More than half of the parents (eight) elected to go with "strongly agree" and half of that number (four parents) chose "agree." The remaining two parent survey respondents opted instead to "disagree."

Table 15

Parent Question 12

My Son Received Help Researching Various Colleges

Category	Value
Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	2
Agree	4
Strongly Agree	8
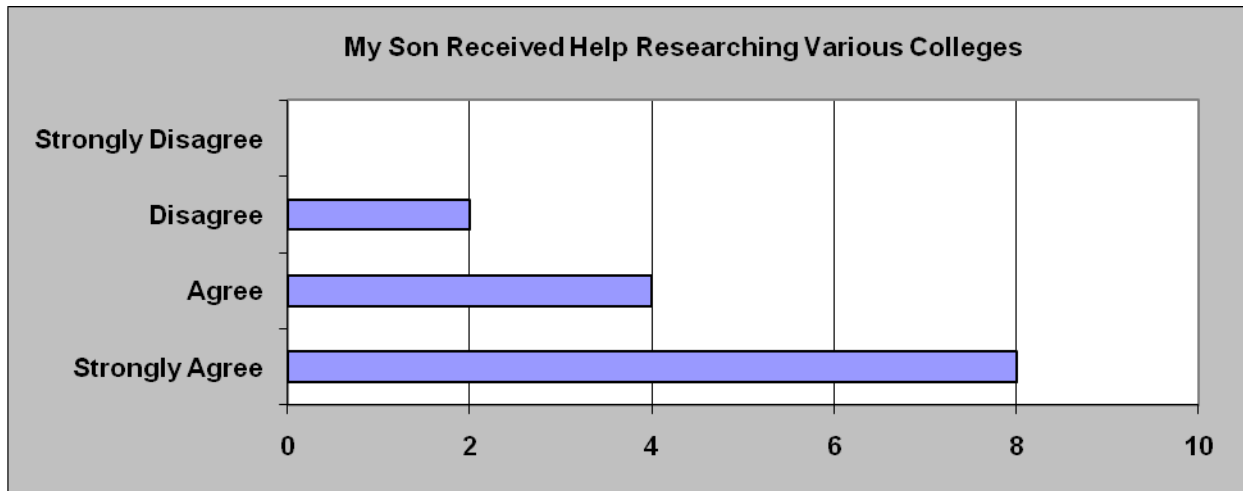
The Kappa League parent responses for question # 13 "My son received help applying to college," are illustrated in Table 16. Although not identical, the parent responses to this question resemble those of the previous question (question # 12 as shown in Table 15). A combined 13 parents made up the categories "agree" and "strongly agree." By a narrow margin, most of the parents chose "strongly agree" (seven) compared with six who chose "agree." Only one parent

reported that they "disagree" that their son received help applying to college as a result of their participation in Kappa League.

Table 16

Parent Question 13
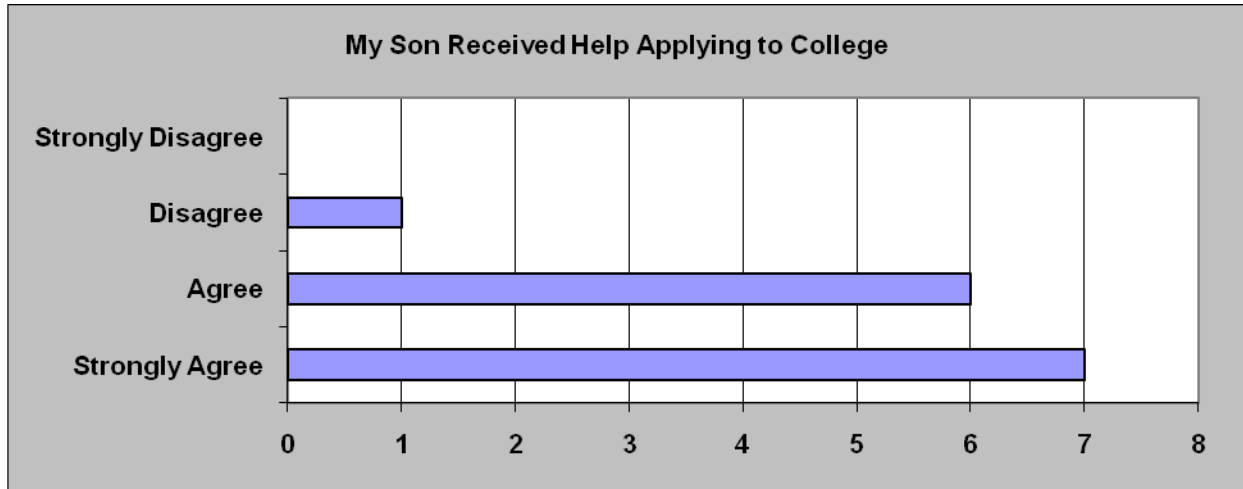
To help inform the quantitative results provided in Tables 13, 14, 15, and 16, qualitative data from the Kappa League parent survey also offered insightful commentary about the program's success in preparing their sons for college. Question # 22, an open-ended question, generated feedback supporting the responses to the Likert-type questions 10, 11, 12, and 13. Question # 22 asked the parents, "How successful was the Kappa League in helping your son prepare for college? Explain."

Some of the written responses from the parents included the following:

Parent-3 stated:
The Kappa League college prep workshops gave my son a step-by-step hands-on approach to the college research process.

Parent- 5 stated:

The Kappa League was very successful in preparing my son for college. He took the information he received from sessions and applied it to deciding on his school.

Parent-8 stated:

The continuous information sessions, the meetings with actual college students sharing their college experiences and the HBCU college fair made my son extremely eager to attend college and eager to complete the application process.

Parent-9 stated:

Well at first, my son wanted to go to the service, but as soon as he decided to go the local community college, they helped with SAT's, financial aid, and admittance to college.

Parent-11 stated:

Very successful, there were things I didn't even know that my son enlightened me on from the Kappa League. They were very knowledgeable, informative, and a very good support system.

College Preparation: Kappa League vs. High School-Student Perspective

One of the final aspects of this research study sought to measure the impact the NBA Kappa League program made in helping to prepare the young men for college compared to the support they received from their high school. Specifically, the third research question asked the following: *How does the college preparation support the African American teenage males receive through the New Brunswick Alumni Kappa League mentoring program compare to the college preparation assistance they receive from their high school?*

Quantitative and qualitative data to help address the third research question were collected from a series of survey responses as well as from feedback provided through the student focus group. The results to follow help illustrate the student and parent viewpoints about

the college preparation assistance they received from the Kappa League and from their sons'

schools. First, the quantitative and qualitative results from the Kappa League students will be

described and displayed, followed by the quantitative and qualitative results from the Kappa

League parents.

Question numbers 16, 17, and 18 on the Kappa League Student Questionnaire provided

quantitative feedback to address the third research question. The responses were collected using

a Likert-type scale with the following choices: 4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree and

1=Strongly Disagree. The Kappa League participants were asked to respond to the following:

"As a result of participating in Kappa League…"

Student Survey Question # 16)   I received more information about college from

Kappa League than from my high school.

Student Survey Question # 17)   The men of Kappa League took a greater interest in

my college pursuits than most of my high school

teachers.

Student Survey Question # 18)   I learned more about the college application process

from Kappa League than from my high school

counselor/teachers.

The Kappa League student responses for question# 16, "I received more information

about college from Kappa League than from my high school," are illustrated in Table 17. All of

the young men who took part in the survey either selected "agree" or "strongly agree" that they

received more information about college from the Kappa League than from their high schools.

Notably, no respondents chose the categories "disagree" or "strongly disagree" for question# 16, and most of the Kappa League students selected "strongly agree." As displayed in Table 17, 13 young men chose strongly agree while three responded with "agree." Although high school tends to be a place where students receive information about college (and many of the young men in study may have received such information from their schools), they each reported that the Kappa League program provided them with a greater amount of college information.

Table 17

Student Question 16

The Kappa League student responses for question # 17, "The men of Kappa League took a greater interest in my college pursuits than most of my high school teachers," are illustrated in Table 18. Like the previous survey question responses, all of the young men who responded to this question, either selected "agree" or "strongly agree" and reported that the Kappa League did take a greater interest in their college pursuits than most of their high schools teachers. In fact, according to the results indicated in Table 18, all but one young man selected the category "strongly agree." Fifteen Kappa League students chose strongly agree while one chose "agree."

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This helped to emphasize how obvious it was to the young men that the men of Kappa League were sincerely invested in the students' college pursuits. No respondents chose the categories "disagree" or "strongly disagree" for question # 16.

Table 18

Student Question 17

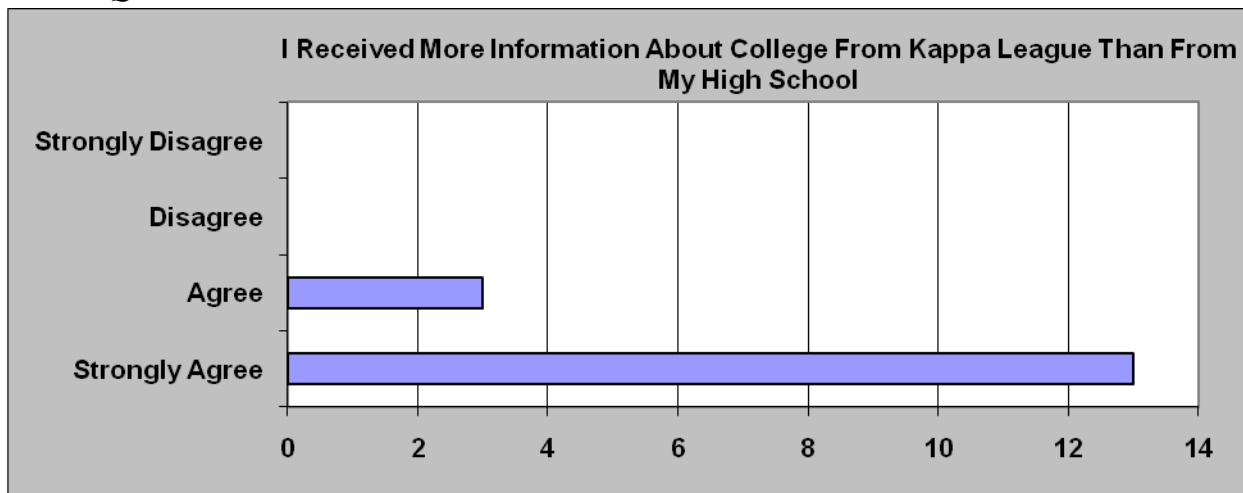The Men of Kappa League Took A Greater Interest In My College Pursuits Than Most of My High School Teachers
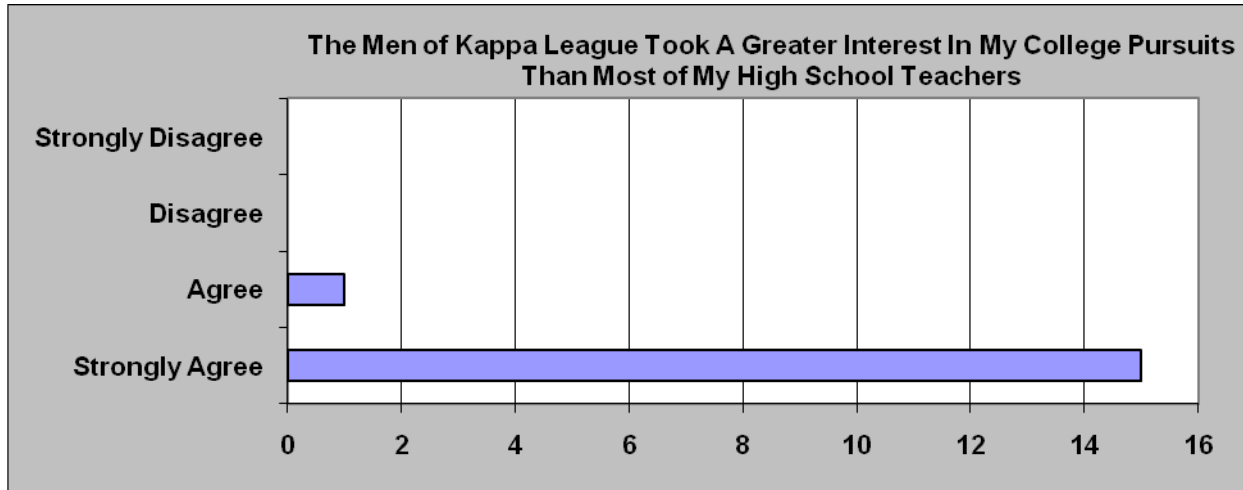
Question # 18 was the final quantitative student survey question related to the Kappa League's ability to help prepare the young men for college as compared to their preparation from high schools. The Kappa League student responses for question # 18, "I learned more about the college application process from Kappa League than from my high school teachers," are illustrated in Table 19. Following the trend of how the young men responded to the other quantitative survey questions supporting research question 3, all of the responses fell into the "agree" and "strongly agree" categories once again suggesting that the support given to them from Kappa League was greater than the support from their high schools. For this particular question, the young men reported that they learned more about the college application process from Kappa League than from their high schools. While the number of students who chose

"strongly agree" for the previous two questions was much larger than those selecting "agree," an almost equal number of young men reported that they "agree" (seven) versus "strongly agree" (nine) for question # 18. Once again, no respondents selected the categories "disagree" or "strongly disagree" for this question.

Table 19

Student Question 18
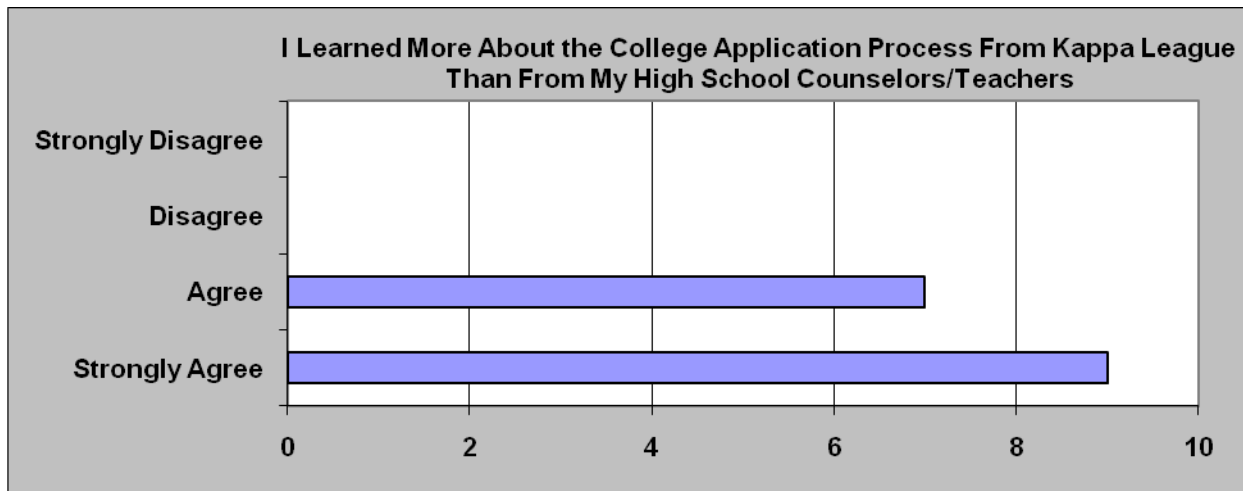
To help inform the quantitative results provided in Tables 17, 18, and 19, qualitative data from the Kappa League student survey also provided feedback about the Kappa League's ability to help prepare the young men for college in comparison to their high schools. Question # 25, an open-ended question, generated responses supporting the data from the Likert-type questions 16, 17, and 18. Question # 25 asked the students, "How did the assistance from the Kappa League compare to the college preparation support you received from your high school counselor/teachers?"

Some of the written responses from the young men included the following:

Student- 5 stated:

There wasn't no comparison. The Kappa League broke it down to the base, from the littlest things to the biggest. At school, they just told me the popular things about college saying its hard work.

Student-6 stated:

I received very little help from my school counselor. The majority of the information that I received was from Kappa League. My mother was so upset about the lack of assistance that we received that she took time off of work to sit with the counselor to make sure all of my information was sent to the colleges in a timely manner.

Student-7 stated:

The Kappa League was the main supporters of my college preparation. My high school would never sit down and explain the college application and importance of college.

Student-8 stated:

The Kappa League motivated me more to go to college than my teachers and counselor in high school. The Kappa League showed me how to make a goal for myself and reach that goal.

Student-10 stated:

Assistance from the Kappa League compared to that of my high school was significantly superior because I had to go through so many processes just to get a hold of my counselor while the men of the Kappa League were only a call/text away.

Student-11 stated:

The college prep support from Kappa League is basically what got me into college because my high school counselor did nothing to help me prepare. Kappa League kept me on top of my application process so that I could meet my deadlines.

Student-12 stated:

The Kappa League did an overall better job of telling us about the college life and giving us a lot of support. And for me, they gave me more support than anyone else in my life about college.

Student-15 stated:

The assistance from Kappa League was definitely more intense than that of my school. There are too many students in high school for a counselor/teacher to pay extensive attention to, whereas Kappa groups were small and focused.

To further support the previous quantitative and qualitative responses to the third research question, information the young men shared in reply to one of the focus group questions also added to the qualitative results. During the focus group, I asked the young men the following: "How would you compare the information you got from your school counselor (or your school in general) for applying to college, to the assistance that you got from Kappa League about college and applying to college?"

Some of the young men's responses are as follows:

Student-1 stated:

My counselor, no names or nothing, she was a good counselor, funny counselor, but she just wanted to do things so fast, so she couldn't really explain things to you about what you really needed for college or to apply to college. She would hand you a bunch of papers and say get lost because I've got other things to do. I mean, she was cool and everything, but she was just, even with my mother there, she was still just trying to push you over, like you sign this and you get out. It would just be that fast and my mother would be like, wow, why is she in such a hurry all the time. But from Kappa League, they actually sit down and they show you, look what you missed right here and this is important to fill out, and make sure you do write a paper and include your picture on it so they'll know who they're looking at while they're reading your application.

Student-2 stated:

Well, my counselor, like she really didn't do much. Like, every time I would bring up something about college, she would just dump what she had for me at that time on me and then after that she'd go MIA. Like, whenever I went to Kappa

League, they showed me what I really needed to do, what I probably should look forward to, what I should write, and all the forms I should submit. She, like whenever she was available, every now and then, she would dump whatever information she had and then she would be gone.

Student-3 stated:

My counselor was actually pretty great. She did help me out a lot, because I told her at one point I was thinking of not going to school but she was like, whoa, slow down, so she helped me out a lot. But naturally, she was very busy because they have a lot of students there to see, so I guess I had to learn how to know what questions to ask. Because you work with other people's time, you just have to know what you need. But with Kappa League, of course there's always more time because we have like times that we meet with each other, and we meet for extended periods of time and stuff like that.

Student-4 stated:

I think that Kappa League, everybody was more on call, because I mean we could call you or any of the brothers when we needed help or we had questions about certain things like colleges and applications. You guys would actually say, alright, I'll set up a time next week or something like that; we'll come to meet you, we'll come do this, do that, to help you out.

Counselors, you send them a Counselor Request Form and they'll put you on the schedule and you might not see them for the next week or two weeks, so they're booked up or something. But like with the Kappa League, you can just call them, and say, ok, I need help on this and they would email or come see you and actually help you out and give you all the information that you need. Especially Mr. Culpepper, I have to admit like he's probably 60% of the reason why I'm in college right now. Because of everything from setting up meetings at his house, coming to my home and showing me how to do my resume and my profiles and editing my essays and just meeting with me. My school counselor she was good, but she really didn't do that, it was just like come to me when you've got your stuff together and I will send them out, and it was just like that.

College Preparation: Kappa League vs. High School-Parent Perspective

In addition to being supported by student results, data from the Kappa League parents also addressed the third research question addressing the Kappa League's degree of college preparation support given to the young men compared to that of their high schools. The parent

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results stemmed from research collected through quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were based on the parents' responses to questions 14, 15, and 17 on the Kappa League Parent Questionnaire. Qualitative responses also came from the parent survey, but were taken from the answers to question # 23, one of the open-ended questions.

Like the other parts of the research study, the quantitative responses were collected using a Likert-type scale with the following choices: 4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree. To collect the quantitative data, the Kappa League parents were asked to respond to the following: "As a result of participating in Kappa League…"

Parent Survey Question # 14)   My son gained information about college from Kappa League that he wasn't given in school.

Parent Survey Question # 15)   The men of Kappa League took a greater interest in my son's college pursuits than most of his high school teachers.

Parent Survey Question # 17)   I learned more about the college application process from Kappa League than my son's school.

The Kappa League parents only responded by choosing "agree" or "strongly agree" to all three quantitative survey questions confirming that they, like their sons, generally felt more supported by what the Kappa League offered their sons (and them as parents) as opposed to what was offered from their son's school. The first parent survey question, question # 14, "My son gained information about college that he wasn't given in school," is shown in Table 20. The parents replied that they either agreed or strongly agreed with this question and a majority of the

responses fell into the "strongly agree" category. As seen in Table 20, two parents responded that

they "agree" that their sons gained information about college as a result of their participation in

Kappa League that he wasn't given in school, while 12 indicated that they "strongly agree." No

parents answered this question by selecting "disagree" of "strongly disagree."

Table 20

Parent Question 14
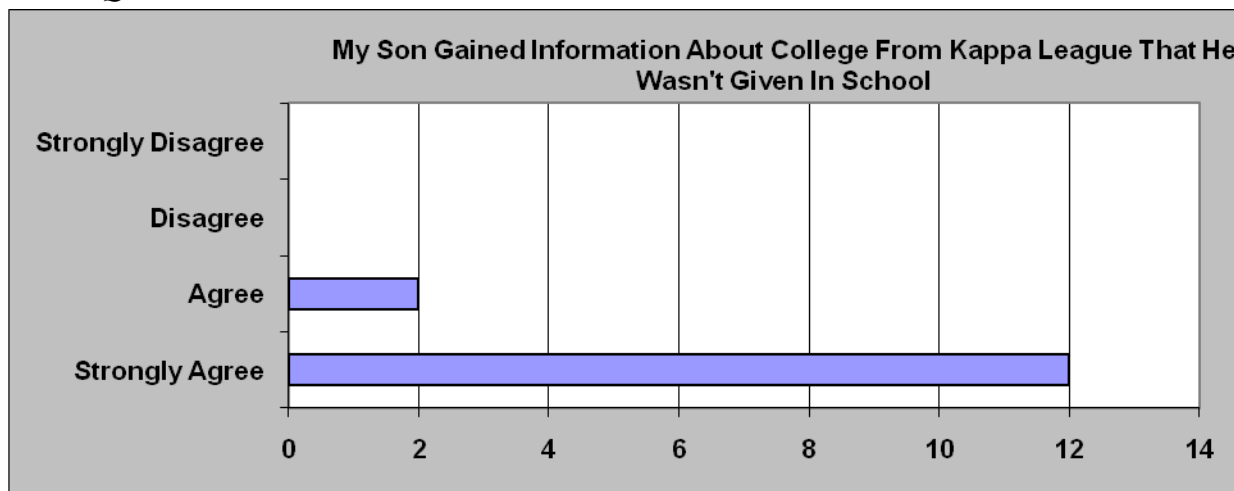
The parents responded to survey question # 15, "The men of Kappa League took a greater

interest in my son's college pursuits than most of his high school teachers," in a similar way to

the previous question (question # 14). All parents either chose the "agree" or "strongly agree"

category, and the strongly agree category was selected slightly more than agree. Results

suggested that parents seemed to feel that the men of the NBA Kappa League took a greater

interest in their son's college pursuits than most of their high school teachers. As shown in Table

21, nine parents responded with "strongly agree" and five with "agree." Once again, no parents

elected to go with the "disagree" or "strongly disagree" categories.

Table 21

Parent Question 15
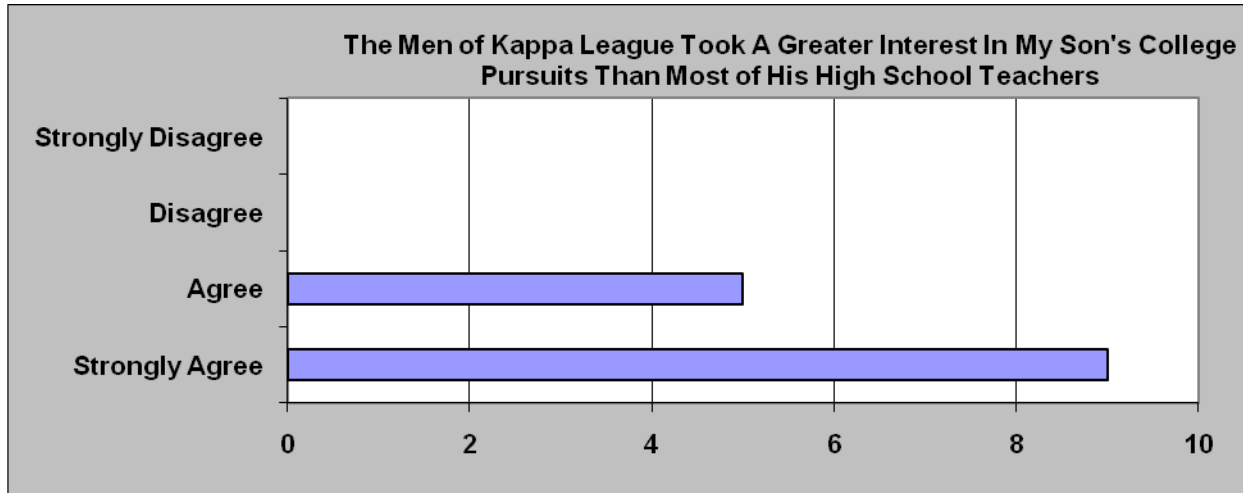
The final quantitative parent survey question addressing research question three related

specifically to what the parents received from the Kappa League versus their son's school,

regarding the college application process. Question # 17 asked parents to provide their response

to the following: "I learned more about the college application process from Kappa League than

my son's school." To this point, the parents responded to direct questions about their sons, and

while question # 17 does concern their sons as well, it does so in a more indirect manner. As

seen in Table 22, while the number of parents who responded that they agreed (six) compared to

those who strongly agreed (nine) were closer in this question than the previous two, the fact

remained that they all responded to the question using only one of those two options. This

reveals that in some way, each of the parents felt that they received more information about

applying to college from Kappa League than their son's school.

Table 22

Parent Question 17
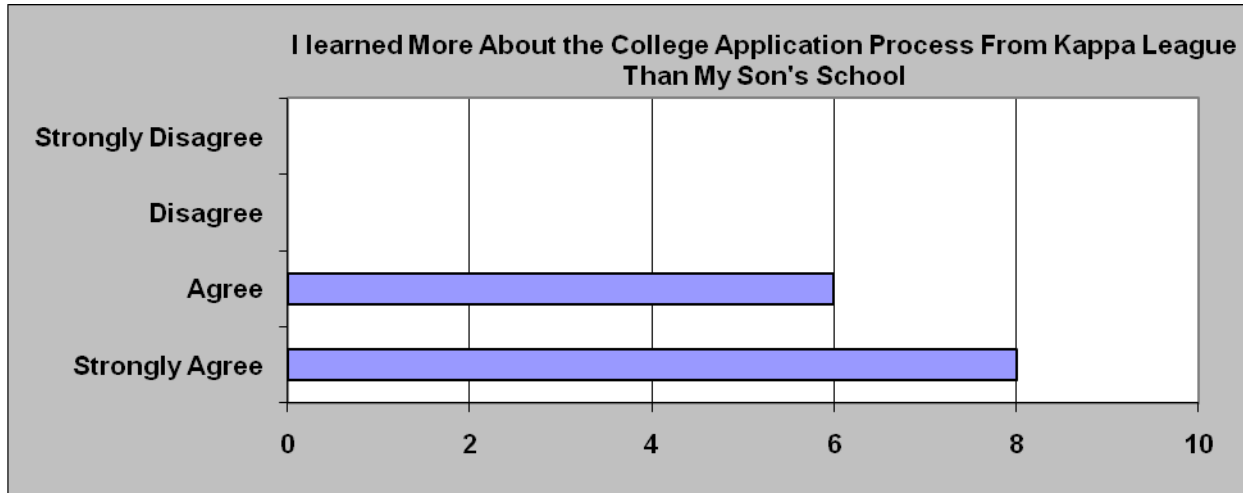
The quantitative results provided in Tables 20, 21, and 22, and the qualitative data from

the Kappa League parent survey offered meaningful information about the Kappa League

program's ability to support the young men in preparing for college to a greater degree when

compared to their high schools. Question # 23, an open-ended question, generated feedback

supporting the responses to the Likert-type questions 14, 15, and 17. Question #23 asked the

parents, "How did the assistance from the Kappa League compare to the college preparation

support you received from your son's high school counselor/teachers?

Some of the written responses from the parents included the following:

Parent-2 stated:
It was more personal and held him to a higher level of expectation.

Parent-3 stated:
The Kappa League college prep program superseded the high school information
session. Kappa League was more of a personal experience.

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Parent-4 stated:

The assistance wasn't very good from my son's high school counselor. The Kappa League walked my son through it and expressed the importance of good grades. The school only answered what you asked.

Parent-8 stated:

There is no comparison. The school provided very little assistance with college preparation. The little assistance I received from the school was only after I reached out to the counselor. The Kappa League provided many information sessions for parents, including presentations by financial aid counselors and provided assistance with the application process as a whole.

Parent-9 stated:

There was no comparison at all because my son's high school did not support him at all. We did not receive anything in reference to college from his high school.

Parent-12 stated:

I didn't receive any assistance from the counselor/teachers. The Kappa League help is the only help that we received from outside sources and for that I am grateful.

Parent-14 stated:

The Kappa League provided the information/guidance without us having to request it, it was a main focus. At school, we had to chase down the counselor to obtain guidance. We did, but it was disappointing considering it was the school being non-responsive.

Conclusion

Each research question was addressed throughout the course of this chapter. Based on the results that stemmed from the survey questions (Likert-type and open-ended) as well as through the student focus group, the data supported the message that the NBA Kappa League program had a positive impact in the lives of the participants and their families. The students and parents

who responded shared information affirming that Kappa League helped them in a variety of ways in high school as well as in preparing them for college. When given the option (on the quantitative survey questions) to choose the degree to which the Kappa League helped them in these particular areas, most of the students and parents either responded with "strongly agree" or "agree," suggesting their satisfaction with the program.

The qualitative data that was provided in this chapter strengthened the notion that the students and parents deemed the Kappa League worthwhile and beneficial, particularly in the area of high school improvement and college preparation. This was evidenced through the qualitative responses from the open-ended survey questions completed by the students and parents, and the responses revealed in the focus group in which a number of the young men took part. Both sources of qualitative feedback enhanced the quantitative results by putting a "face" to the data. While the tables provided a useful visual account of the participants' feelings about a particular question, the comments taken directly from the students and parents allowed for their individual voices to be infused into the study. Ultimately, the mixed-methods reporting of the research findings offered a more compelling explanation of the thoughts and experiences of the Kappa League young men and their parents.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

At the onset of this study, my goal was to measure the effectiveness of the New Brunswick Kappa League mentoring program for African American teenage males from the perspective of a sample of the participants and their parents. I specifically wanted to gauge the impact the program had in the areas of academic achievement and college preparation. I sought to understand if participation in the Kappa League program over the course of several years had any influence on the young men's academic performance in high school, if participation influenced their college preparation process, and finally how the support provided by Kappa League compared to the assistance given to them by their respective high schools. I also hoped to understand ways my leadership capacity needed to be enhanced to implement the changes to the Kappa League program that were required to most effectively benefit the young men.

The responses from the young men who matriculated through the program and graduated high school in 2010, and the responses from their parents were used to help determine the Kappa League program's success. This chapter provides a summary of the overall study including what was achieved, the research limitations, recommendations, and other information about what the study revealed and why it mattered.

Summary of the Findings

With a large body of existing data chronicling the academic struggles of African American males, information proposing successful strategies to help address these concerns is not as readily available. This study identified mentoring as an option to combat some of the struggles Black males face in high school and when transitioning into the college arena. According to Brinter et.al, (2006), youth who participate in mentoring relationships attend class more often, have fewer school absences, are less aggressive, take part in more college preparatory activities, and have a better chance of engaging in higher education. The results of this study supported research such as that of Britner et al., and revealed that the Kappa League mentoring program positively impacted the young men who participated, academically and behaviorally during their high school years.

The data reported in Chapter 4 (Findings) illustrated and summarized the student and parent thoughts about the impact of the Kappa League program versus that of their high school in the following three categories: (a) high school performance and behavior, (b) pursuing and applying to college, and (c) college preparation. Survey and interview methods were utilized to help determine if the young men's participation in the program impacted their academic performance and their behavior in high school. Additionally, the study measured how influential the Kappa League was in educating the teenagers about various colleges, and assisting them during the college application process. Finally, comparisons were drawn between the supports provided by Kappa League versus the young men's respective high schools.

When addressing the first category, I discovered that an overwhelming number of the Kappa League young men and their parents noted that their high school academic performance

and behavior were positively impacted as a result of Kappa League. Specifically, when answering the four quantitative survey questions related to this area of the study, the young men all responded with either "agree" or "strongly agree" fully acknowledging the benefits of their mentoring experience on their high school academics and behavior. Among the group of parent respondents, over the course each of the same four survey questions (making up a total of 56 responses), only four responses deviated from the "agree" or "strongly agree" trend. Instead, for those four answers, "disagree" was selected. Even though some of the parents failed to identify as strongly as their sons, there was still a vast majority of them who, like their sons, looked favorably upon the Kappa League program's capacity to positively influence the young men's academics and behavior.

In the second category covered in the Findings Chapter, the students and parents responded similarly to one another on the survey questions related to the Kappa League's influence in their efforts of pursuing and applying to college. In response to the four survey questions inquiring about the NBA Kappa League's role in assisting the young men in areas related to college interest and application, most of the feedback was favorable. Students reported receiving a great deal of college support from the Kappa League program and parents responded that their son's interest in pursuing college was enhanced.

Based on the four quantitative research questions administered to the students and parents, a majority of the responses supported the idea that the Kappa League program played an important role in increasing the young men's interest in college and also was a factor in helping them apply to college. Each of the young men responded with either "strongly agree" or "agree" that they developed a greater interest in attending college and was encouraged to apply as a result

of participating in Kappa League. The parents responded in a similar fashion when asked if the Kappa League had an influence on their sons.

Another means of measuring the Kappa League's impact in helping the young men pursue college was connected to the amount of support they reported receiving researching colleges and going through the application process. Although not every student and parent responded with "strongly agree" and "agree" in response to receiving help researching colleges and going through the application process, most of them did respond that way. In response to the question about whether or not they (or their sons) received help researching various colleges from Kappa League, only one student and two parents disagreed, while the remaining students and parents either agreed or strongly agreed that they received support. When answering the question about whether or not they (or their sons) received help going through the college application process, only one student and one parent disagreed. All other students and parents agreed or strongly agreed that the Kappa League program helped with the college applications. Qualitative data to further support this notion was provided in the survey open-ended responses where the student and parent participants were able to write about the specific ways that Kappa League program helped them or their sons prepare for college.

The third major category addressed in the previous chapter compared the support towards pursuing college given to the young men by the Kappa League program compared to that of their respective high schools. Three particular survey questions allowed the students and parents to share their views. The results of those questions strongly suggested that the men in NBA Kappa League program seemed more concerned about helping the young men pursue college, did more to help the young men learn about college, and did a better job of educating the young men and

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parents about the college application process. All of the student and parent responses for the questions inquiring about the Kappa League's support in those areas just listed, compared to the efforts from the high schools, resulted in "agree" and "strongly agree". These results confirmed that in the areas of providing information about college, taking an interest in the young men pursuing college, and in helping the young men and parents learn about college, the Kappa League was more successful than the high schools that the young men attended in meeting their needs.

Limitations

While much of the results of this study had positive outcomes, a number of limitations existed. One limitation was the small sample size. Typical to many studies of youth mentoring relationships, small sample sizes (often samples of convenience) tend to lack statistical power, and limit the researcher's ability to generalize the findings confidently to larger populations (Dubois, Doolittle, Yates, Silverthorn, & Tebes, 2006). Although other young men (not participating in the study) also participated in the NBA Kappa League program, a majority of young men selected for the study (and their parents) were among the original groups that started in 2008 and 2009. The potential insight that could be gathered from those particular young men and their parents offered a unique opportunity to gain an understanding of the true impact the program might have made in their lives as well as the lives of other participants.

Another limitation was the close relationships I established with the young men in the study. By far, a strong bond between youth and mentor is an important factor for positive outcomes to occur in mentoring relationships (Dubois, et al., 2002). However, that same bond between youth and mentor can interfere in the process of a mentor acting as a researcher,

attempting to gather unbiased information from the youth. Since I served as a school counselor for more than half of the young men in the study, in addition to being their mentor, I had established very close relationships with them. In a positive way, this closeness helped facilitate the process of collecting of data from students, however, on the negative side it may have influenced their ability to respond honestly to the survey and focus group questions in an effort to help my research look good and produce favorable results on my behalf.

As with the students, limitations may have existed in my ability to generate unbiased responses from the parents. Many of the parents have positively benefitted from this free program I initiated and allowed their sons to take part in over the years. Many have expressed feelings of gratitude and have appeared indebted to me as a result of the time and dedication they feel I gave to help better the lives of their sons. Their appreciation could have increased their likelihood to respond in favorable ways to the survey regardless of what their true feelings may have been about the program. Although I encouraged them to provide impartial feedback based on their actual thoughts and not any feelings of obligation to me, their desire to assist me may have prevailed in some instances.

Recommendations for Future Research

Determining if mentoring programs can be a viable way to address some of the academic and behavioral issues Black males experience is worth exploring in greater detail. Based on the positive results of this study (while taking the limitations into consideration), several areas of research can develop and provide more information about the benefits of mentoring Black males, and possibly other groups as well.

There are five recommendations for further research. The first is to analyze actual high school grades and standardized test scores over the duration of mentoring. This study was able to measure academic improvement based on student and parent reporting. Quantitative measures were performed generating "general" acknowledgements such as if grades improved, or if students focused more on their grades and academics as a result of the program. However, no specific analysis if the participants' actual report card grades or scores on state standardized assessments were factors used to determine if academic growth actually occurred, and if it did occur, to what extent. By exploring the possible academic benefits of mentoring Black males through greater research, educators, parents, and those concerned about the achievement of Black males will understand if mentoring initiatives should be taken into serious consideration as a possible solution to the problem.

The second recommendation is to conduct a comparative study of young men who participate in a mentoring program like the NBA Kappa League, with those from similar schools and with similar backgrounds not participating in such a program. This study measured the experiences of a small group of African American males who had been involved in a mentoring initiative from 3 to 5 years. These young men were exposed to specific and deliberate activities to help them focus on improving their grades and behavior during high school. Emphasis was also placed on preparing them for college and helping them take the proper steps to navigate the application process. By identifying another group of Black males to study with similar academic and demographic backgrounds, but without the support of such a mentoring program, conclusions could be drawn based on their rates of success. The mentored and non-mentored groups could be compared based on high school grade improvement and success, as well as their

success going through the college application process and eventual college acceptance rates and enrollment.

The third recommendation is to conduct a longitudinal study of former mentoring program participants a number of years after completing the program. The focus group conducted in this study took place about 6 months after the young men completed the Kappa League program. Additionally, each of the young men had recently completed their first semester of college at the time of the interview. Information provide in Chapter 2 suggested that Black male college enrollment rates were low as well as their college retention rates. Analyzing the group of mentored young men years after their high school graduation (and subsequent completion of the mentoring program) will offer meaningful feedback about the possible long-term impact of their mentoring experience, and if their views about the experience were lasting or temporal. Such information will inform researchers of mentoring about the duration or limits of program benefits, and if mentoring relationships might need to be sustained beyond high school in order for the young men to continue to be successful. Even if young men enroll in college as a result of the support of a mentoring program, there is no evidence to suggest that they will be able to sustain themselves without receiving similar support on that level to help them remain enrolled.

The fourth recommendation is to research other Kappa League programs across the country to determine if those programs yield similar results. Men of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. sponsor Kappa League initiatives throughout the country with young Black males from elementary school through high school. While the New Brunswick Kappa League program proved to be successful in addressing a number of needs plaguing Black boys, other Kappa

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League programs might be achieving similar or even greater success with their young men. Since this Kappa League model is being implemented across the country, similar research studies, especially those that yield comparable findings, will provide a deeper understanding of the successful elements of mentoring Black males. The greater the number of programs boasting success in improving Black male achievement, college preparation, and college enrollment, the more likely such initiatives will be rendered significant and more readily adopted as a viable option for helping redirect our young Black males.

The final recommendation is to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the Kappa League program's impact on young men from (mother-led) single-parent households. Much of the information collected in this study focused on the Kappa League's ability to positively influence the participants' academic performance and pursuit of college. Only one survey question addressed the specific value of the Kappa League mentor as a male role model, and only one focus group question addressed the benefit of having Black men as mentors. Since a number of the young men participating in this study resided in single-parent households with their mothers, their particular viewpoints (as well as their mother's views) about the value of the Black male mentors of Kappa League would be worthy of exploring in greater detail. One at-risk factor for Black male youth, in general, noted in the Chapter 2 Literature Review, is the number of them living in fatherless homes and the negative impact that often has in their development as young men. Further research might focus specifically on those young men without active fathers and without significant male examples to measure if a positive impact exists as a result of having consistent contact with Black men present in their lives.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Similar to the recommendations shared for increased research on the benefits of mentoring African-American males, suggestions about ways to improve practice in this area should also be taken into consideration. There are five recommendations for future practice.

The first recommendation is to encourage other Black male fraternities and civic organizations made up of Black men to join the mentoring efforts. Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. is to be commended for making Kappa League mentoring programs a national initiative to be conducted by all chapters across the country and internationally. However, this one African-American male fraternity cannot uphold the mantle of improving the lives of young Black males alone and while Kappa League programs service thousands of young men, thousands more are still in need of mentors. Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. can take the lead in training other Black fraternities and civic organizations made up of Black men to engage in similar initiatives targeting black youth in need of support.

The second recommendation is to use the results of this research study to inform high school counselors, teachers, and other personnel about the experiences of Black males and their families. High school counselors, teachers, and other staff members play a vital role in the academic success of students and their ability to transition on to college. However, most of the students and families in this study reported experiencing greater feelings of support, encouragement, and assistance concerning academics and college preparation from the Kappa League program than from their high schools. In fact, many parents expressed their displeasure with the lack of support they received from their son's schools. The results of this study could be shared with the personnel of the high schools where the young men attended to help them

improve the support they offer Black males and their families. The information might help

educators become more understanding of the needs of Black males and their families and

improve their levels of communication and sensitivity. Sensitivity on the part of high school

educators could possibly result in greater efforts to meet the academic needs of Black males.

The third recommendation is to establish partnerships with high schools to disseminate

information about academic success and college preparation. While the NBA Kappa League

program had a few men with experience working in education, high school faculty and staff have

a greater amount of information about college and other valuable educational resources. To help

improve the communication between high schools and their students and families of color, the

Kappa League could make efforts to partner with various schools to conduct information

sessions on their campuses. This would help Black males and their families feel more

comfortable with their high school staff, and could alleviate some of the stress school counselors

and families experience, particularly during the college preparation and application process. The

Kappa League would be able to refer students to the own high schools for the majority of their

college preparation information, and would be able to supplement that information and focus

more energy during the monthly meetings on other areas the young men need to work on in

addition to their academics and college pursuits.

The fourth recommendation is to encourage opportunities for ongoing feedback about the

program. It took 5 years for the first formal evaluation of the Kappa League program to occur.

Moving forward, ongoing evaluation efforts need to be adopted to ensure that the program

continues to make progress and properly meet the needs of the students and families involved.

Annual surveys and focus groups with young men and parents of existing members as well as

former members can help create a culture of constant improvement and ongoing growth within the program.

The final recommendation is to continue to support the young men after they matriculate through the Kappa League program. For many of the young men who participated in Kappa League, they attribute the bonds they formed with the mentors as a source of encouragement and support that helped increase their success level during high school and eased their transition into college. To have close relationships with male role models from 2-5 years of their lives and then to be without that support could bode negatively for some of the young men. Instead, efforts to continue to foster the relationships through periodic text messages, e-mails, Facebook posts, and phone calls could help extend the relationship between the young men and mentors even after they complete the Kappa League program.

Reflections on the Importance of This Study

As this study progressed, I began to realize how vital the NBA Kappa League program had been to the African American young men who have participated and to their families. For various reasons, many of the Black young men I encountered in my work with the Kappa League seemed to be lacking any semblance of a positive male presence in their lives. I learned that the bonds that were established between the young men and the adult men of the Kappa League program extended well beyond bimonthly interaction. Both the boys and men accepted one another like a family.

I discovered that the men of my fraternity responsible for mentoring the young men, in some instances, became like fathers, big brothers, and uncles to them. What I did not understand

prior to this study, was that a culture was being established in Kappa League, where young men

gained a safe place to ask questions, express their fears, acknowledge their challenges, make

mistakes, and dream about a better life. They were only free to expose these emotions because

they also knew this same culture (provided through Kappa League) allowed them access to Black

men who were willing to answer their questions honestly, reassure them despite their fears, give

them hope in the midst of their challenges, help them to correct their mistakes, and serve as

living examples of what their lives could one day be. The Kappa League mentors served as

powerful role models who not only gave the young men access to resources and opportunities,

but by their presence demonstrated what the future might bring (Britner et al., 2006).

Chapter 2 offered a description of some of the academic challenges Black male youth

experience from elementary through high school as well as in college. Data that were reported in

that chapter concerning standardized test scores suggested that as early as elementary school,

Black males tend to lag behind students of other ethnic groups both male and female alike. The

reports on high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates (in Chapter 2) also reflected

the poor state of Black male academic achievement and revealed relatively few of them will

enroll in and graduate from college.

Beyond the data and empirical information chronicling the deficiencies of young Black

males, particularly those studies related to success in high school and college, I felt impelled to

pursue this research topic based on my personal frustrations of witnessing firsthand some of the

negative ways Black males have been characterized during my experiences as an educator. On

countless occasions, I have observed situations where Black male students have been the subject

of unsubstantiated disciplinary actions, times where they have been unjustifiably labeled as

unable to academically perform at the same level as other students and given fewer opportunities to take rigorous courses, have been subjugated to special education involvement for reasons that appear questionable at times, and discouraged from applying to certain 4-year colleges, or not given adequate direction on how to apply to college at all.

The reasons I did not fall victim to those previously listed trappings when I was a high school student was because I received a great amount of support and encouragement from my family and from other role models (many of whom were Black males) that my parents strategically placed around me. Like the young men and parents in this study that reported they were not that satisfied with the support they received from their school, I had similar thoughts about my experiences (except for having an extremely supportive counselor). Although not pushed as much as I should have been in school, I was the recipient of a wealth of positive Black male examples of success outside of the school setting that countered any negative feedback that I may have received, and made up for the support that I was not given. As a result, I was bombarded with the message early in my life from home and my family's support system that I was going to college. It was not an option. Instead it was something I had to pursue. For that reason, I never allowed anything or anyone to deter me from believing I was college material.

In a similar vein, my passion to use the Kappa League as a vehicle to provide the participants academic encouragement and to help prepare them for college was birthed out of the those experiences that worked for me as a Black teenage male whose academic potential was often overlooked and underestimated. This study confirmed my personal beliefs that African American males can find academic success (regardless of what they may or may not be receiving in their local schools), when immersed in an environment where they have consistent academic

support and encouragement, are equipped with the tools and beliefs that they can achieve academic success, and receive unrelenting messages that college is an expectation as opposed to an option. The men of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. are examples of the type of men who have already made a commitment to instill these characteristics in the lives of Black male youth, however their efforts must increase and others must join in on the efforts.

Why does this study about a small mentoring program serving a group of Black boys in New Jersey matter? It matters, because unfortunately, many Black male students throughout the country are not finding the same success in high school as their counterparts, and as a result are not reaching the college level to the same degree. Although the academic struggles of young Black males have been well documented, few widespread efforts to help their academic state have been discovered. As an educator, particularly a Black male educator, I assume direct responsibility for helping to generate solutions to combat the dilemma facing Black males and hope to encourage others to do the same.

This study matters because it may create a sense of urgency in the lives of successful Black men, and help them understand they have what it takes to make a difference. If more Black men start to believe they can positively influence Black male youth to improve their academics and behavior, maybe they will become more active in their local schools, communities, and places of worship to work directly with youth initiatives. Ultimately, this study helps reveal that the consistent efforts of Black men (such as those in fraternities and other professional organizations) who have achieved higher education may hold the formula to transform their past accomplishments into present-day successes for today's generation and even future generations of African-American male youth.

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Appendix A

Rising Senior Survey

The New Brunswick Alumni Chapter of

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated

"Rising Senior Survey"

Saturday May 2, 2009
Rutgers Busch Student Center

Name:_____ School: _____

Please respond regarding your Senior Year/College: (Please be as honest as possible)

1) After high school I plan to pursue: **college   job   military   undecided**

2) The Math class I am currently taking is:_____

3) The Science class I am currently taking is:_____

4) I already have taken the SAT test.   **YES   NO**

5) I plan to apply to a Community College.   **YES   NO**

6) I plan to apply to a Four-Year College.   **YES   NO**

7) I plan to apply to a Historically Black College.   **YES   NO**

8) I have already requested applications for the colleges I plan to apply to.   **YES   NO**

9) I already have applications from the colleges in which I plan to apply.   **YES   NO**

10) I have done research on the colleges in which I plan to apply.   **YES   NO**

11) I would be willing to meet over the summer to begin planning for college.   **YES   NO**

12) In college I plan to major in:_____

13) What can we do to help you prepare for college:_____

_____

Kappa League Program Effectiveness - Student Questionnaire

I am in the process of identifying ways that the Kappa League mentoring program benefits the young men who participate. My goal to measure the ways that the program has addressed your needs as an African-American young man educationally and in other ways as well. Please take about 15-20 minutes to complete this 3-page survey regarding your participation in Kappa League during the entire span of time you have been a member. Your responses will remain anonymous, and will be used to improve future activities, and to help us best prepare other young men for high school and college success. Please return the survey to Mr. Gray soon as you finish.

Directions: Please circle the number that indicates the level in which you agree to the following statements about your experiences in the Kappa League program. (circle only one per statement)

As a result of participating in Kappa League…	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1) I developed positive male peers.	4	3	2	1
2) I developed at least one adult male role model.	4	3	2	1
3) I became a role model to my peers.	4	3	2	1
4) I improved my leadership skills.	4	3	2	1
5) My behavior in school improved.	4	3	2	1
6) I focused more on my grades and academics.	4	3	2	1
7) My grades started to improve.	4	3	2	1
8) I became a more confident student.	4	3	2	1
9) I received more academic encouragement from Kappa League than from most of my teachers.	4	3	2	1
10) I learned the benefits of earning a college degree.	4	3	2	1
11) I developed a greater interest in attending college.	4	3	2	1
12) I was encouraged to apply to college.	4	3	2	1
13) I received help researching different colleges.	4	3	2	1
14) I received help going through the college application process.	4	3	2	1
15) I gained some information about college from Kappa League that I wasn't given in my school.	4	3	2	1
16) I received more information about college from Kappa League than from my high school.	4	3	2	1
17) The men of Kappa League took a greater interest in my college pursuits than most of my high school teachers.	4	3	2	1
18) I learned more about the college application process from Kappa League than from my high school counselor/teachers.	4	3	2	1
19) I learned about future career opportunities.	4	3	2	1
20) I learned the value of community service.	4	3	2	1
21) The Kappa League program was instrumental in helping me get into college.	4	3	2	1
22) I would recommend the Kappa League Program to other African-American young men.	4	3	2	1

23) How successful was the Kappa League in helping you become a better student in high school? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

24) How successful was the Kappa League in helping you prepare for college? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

25) How did the assistance from the Kappa League compare to the college preparation support you received from your high school counselor/teachers?

_____

_____

_____

26) Are there any additional topics (that we do not cover already) that you think we should discuss in Kappa League that would help us prepare future young men for college?

_____

_____

_____

27) Please share additional ways you might have benefitted from the Kappa League program.

_____

_____

_____

Directions: To help us further understand the extent to which you might have benefitted from this year's Kappa League Program, we would like to collect some personal information from you. Like the first page of the survey, this information will be kept confidential.

28) What is your age? (mark only one)

☐ 12-14

☐ 15-17

☐ 18-20

29) How many years have you participated in the Kappa League mentoring program? (mark only one)

☐ 5 years ☐ 2 years

☐ 4 years ☐ 1 year

☐ 3 years

30) How often do you communicate with your natural father? (mark only one)

☐ Daily/almost daily ☐ I don't have a relationship with him

☐ Weekly ☐ Never met him

☐ Monthly ☐ Other_____

☐ A few times a year (please specify)

31) What best describes the family with whom you live? (mark only one)

☐ Two-Parent (natural mother and father) ☐ Single-Parent (living with father)

☐ Two-Parent (natural parent and step-parent) ☐ Grandparent(s)

☐ Single-Parent (living with mother) ☐ Other_____
(please specify)

32) In September I will be doing the following (only high school graduates need to respond):

☐ Attending a 4-year college ☐ Entering the military

☐ Attending a 2-year college ☐ Working (not attending college)

☐ Attending a trade or technical school ☐ Other_____
(please specify)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Kappa League Program Effectiveness - Parent Questionnaire

I am in the process of identifying ways that the New Brunswick Kappa League benefits the young men who participate and their parents. My goal is to be able to identify the effectiveness of the program in meeting the educational and other needs of the participants and their families. I plan to use your feedback as a parent of a Kappa League participant to improve future activities and to help us continue to do our best to prepare young men for high school and college success. Please take about 15-20 minutes to complete the following questionnaire regarding your son's participation in Kappa League during the entire span of time he has been a member. Your responses will remain anonymous. Please return the survey to Alex Gray soon as you finish.

<u>Directions</u>: Please indicate the level in which you agree to the following statements regarding you and your son's experiences in the Kappa League Program. (Circle only one per statement)

As a result of participating in Kappa League…	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
33) My son developed positive male peers.	4	3	2	1
34) My son developed at least one adult male role model from the experience.	4	3	2	1
35) My son improved his leadership skills.	4	3	2	1
36) My son's behavior in school improved.	4	3	2	1
37) My son focused more on his grades and academics.	4	3	2	1
38) My son's grades started to improve.	4	3	2	1
39) My son became a more confident student.	4	3	2	1
40) My son received more academic encouragement from Kappa League than from most of his teachers.	4	3	2	1
41) My son learned the benefits of a college degree.	4	3	2	1
42) My son developed a greater interest in college.	4	3	2	1
43) My son was encouraged to apply to college.	4	3	2	1
44) My son received help researching various colleges.	4	3	2	1
45) My son received help applying to college.	4	3	2	1
46) My son gained some information about college from Kappa League that he wasn't given in school.	4	3	2	1
47) The men of Kappa League took a greater interest in my son's college pursuits than most of his high school teachers.	4	3	2	1
48) The parent sessions gave me useful information about the college application process.	4	3	2	1
49) I learned more about the college application process from Kappa League than my son's school.	4	3	2	1
50) The Kappa League program was instrumental in helping my son get into college.	4	3	2	1
51) Overall, my son benefitted academically from participating in the Kappa League.	4	3	2	1
52) I would recommend the Kappa League Program to other parents who have a teenage son.	4	3	2	1

Directions: For items #21-24, please respond by writing out your responses to the following questions.

53) How successful was the Kappa League in helping your son become a better student in high school? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

54) How successful was the Kappa League in helping your son prepare for college? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

55) How did the assistance from the Kappa League compare to the college preparation support you received from your son's high school counselor/teachers?

_____

_____

_____

_____

56) What aspects of the Kappa League program were most beneficial to you as a parent?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Directions: To help us further understand the extent to which you might have benefitted from this year's Kappa League Program, we would like to collect some personal information from you. Like the first page of the survey, this information will be kept confidential. (Please only select one response for each question)

57) How many years has your son participated in the Kappa League program?

   ☐ 5 years   ☐ 2 years

   ☐ 4 years   ☐ 1 year

   ☐ 3 years

58) Does your son have a positive relationship with his natural father?

   ☐ Yes   ☐ Has no relationship with his natural father

   ☐ No   ☐ Other_____
                                                    (Please specify)

59) If you responded, "No" or "Has no relationship with his natural father" for question #25…

  Does your son have a strong relationship with a Black male adult other than his father?
     (Not including men in the Kappa League program)

     ☐ Yes   ☐ No

60) Did your son develop a positive relationship with any of the Black male adults from Kappa League?

     ☐ Yes   ☐ No

61) What best describes your family makeup?

   ☐ Two-Parent (natural mother and father)   ☐ Single-Parent (father)

   ☐ Two-Parent (natural parent and step-parent)   ☐ Grandparent(s)

   ☐ Single-Parent (mother)   ☐ Other_____
                                                    (please specify)

62) What is your relationship to the Kappa Leaguer?

   ☐ Mother   ☐ Grandmother

   ☐ Father   ☐ Grandfather
                                     ☐ Other_____
                                                    (Please specify)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.