

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN QUALITY MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS AND
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES' OVERALL ENGAGEMENT AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

by

Cedric Gerard Miller

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

Mentoring has been the saving grace for many African American males. The positive influence of a caring adult, in many cases, shifted their academic path from danger to success. Programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of America have provided opportunities for students at-risk to form positive relationships along with a better outlook on life. The purpose of this correlational study is to determine if a relationship exists between quality mentoring relationships and attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average of African American males. The research questions guiding this correlational study are: 1) Is there a relationship between quality mentoring relationships and attendance among African American males?, 2) Is there a relationship between quality mentoring relationships and behavior among African American males?, and 3) Is there a relationship between quality mentoring relationships and cumulative grade point average among African American males? This correlational study sample will involve mentors of local mentoring agencies in the Upstate of South Carolina. The instrument used in this correlational study will be the Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ). This instrument was developed by a research consulting team. The Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ) is used to measure mentors' points-of-view and match relationship quality. Data collection will come from attendance reports, discipline records, and report cards along with the Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ) results. Data analysis will be conducted using a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient for this correlational study.

Key words: mentoring, at-risk, youth mentoring, adolescent, school-based mentoring (SBM), community-based mentoring (CBM), quality mentoring relationships, attendance, behavior, cumulative grade point average

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my Grandma, my guardian angel, the late Macie A. Williams. I know that you were with me every step of the way, as I would get constant visits at the most opportune times. You will forever remain in my heart!

To my nephews, Deondre and Jylan, I dedicate this dissertation to you as a reminder you can do anything you set your mind to with the help of the Lord. Continue reaching for the stars and take God with you everywhere you go. Always remember Matthew 19:26, "With God, ALL things are possible." I love you both!

Lastly, to my Godchildren, God-nieces, God-nephews, younger cousins, former, present, and future students, this dissertation is dedicated to you symbolizing knowledge is power. In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Education is important. I charge you to acquire it and go forth to change the world. Your future is bright, and opportunity awaits you!

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“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.” Philippians 1:3

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List of Abbreviations

SBM- School-based Mentoring

CBM- Community-based Mentoring

MCQ- Match Characteristics Questionnaire

MRQ- Match Relationship Quality

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Chapter One includes a background of the struggles African American males encounter, placing them at a disadvantage in comparison to their White counterparts. African American males are at a much higher risk of dropping out of school than any other group. The implementation of mentoring programs for these students has shown to benefit them positively in their attendance, behavior, and academics. Chapter One includes a background of the study, followed by the problem of the study and the purpose of the study. Additionally, the significance of study, hypothesis and definitions related to this study will be discussed.

Background

The early years of education for African American males are very critical to their success. Davis (2003) discovered, it is at that point when Black boys begin exploring their identities related to school (p. 532). For some, with negative outcomes during the early years, it makes it that much more difficult for them. Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Rouse, & Chen (2012) explained, African American children are significantly behind their peers and continue to get further behind each year until third grade (p. 560). Apparent signs of trouble among Black boys are present when they enter kindergarten. African American boys enter school with no sense of the world; not possessing the basic skills needed to complete basic tasks (Barbarin, 2010). Prager (2011) detailed, the large gap between Black males and others is present before starting school and is ongoing throughout their lives (p. 1). Closing this gap must be at the forefront of the education agenda across the United States. Across America, the problem of Black male achievement seems intractable.

Prager (2011) asserted, Black boys are considered failures among any other group. When looking at why Black boys fail, not taking time to set expectations of them can be the root cause. It is no secret that black males are underrepresented in many facets. The achievement of Black males falls below that of White and Asian boys. It was noted that less than 15 percent of Black fourth-grade boys are proficient in reading, compared to over 35 percent of White boys. One study revealed, Black eighth-grade boys are significantly less proficient in math compared to their White male counterparts. Additionally, a huge lapse separates Black students from their peers, putting themselves at odds while affecting their place in society (p. 1-2).

With limited resources, lack of education of one or both parents, and environmental factors, African American males oftentimes suffer the most. Prager (2011) highlighted such alarming statistics: more than 30 percent of Black children live in poverty; in households described as “food insecure”; and in households where parents lack stable employment. Over 10 percent of Black children have a mother with less than a high school education; and almost 80 percent of Black children born between 1985 and 2000 grew up in “high disadvantage” neighborhoods. (p. 5)

Without a father, boys struggle needing a male to emulate. Research showed, children raised by their mothers, specifically boys, are affected most and exhibit low academic achievement, oftentimes leading to not finishing school. Early intervention can yield positive results in these situations (Prager, 2011, p. 4, 8). Growing up in a female, single-parent household can, in some cases, be stereotypical of being unsuccessful. Yaffe (2012) pointed out, masculinity in most cases has various meanings, many negative. Due to the many stereotypes of Black males, it is hard to develop an ideal self and see that success can be attained (p. 4). Black boys need positive people in their lives to help shape them and their future.

Yaffe (2012) postulated, middle school Black boys are struggling exponentially when it comes to academics (p. 6). As a result, academic achievement of African American males is an issue requiring more attention. It has always been negatively displayed causing some Black males to not achieve at their greatest potential. Being portrayed in a negative light, and always being compared to other ethnic groups in terms of academic achievement, places more strain on African American males. Yaffe (2012) emphasized, compared to their White counterparts, African American boys' test scores lag, their chances of growing up in poverty increases, along with attending struggling schools leading to dropping out before graduation (p. 1). This could be due to the disproportionate consequences received for disciplinary infractions. Although all students can, at times, propose a behavior issue, oftentimes, African American males suffer the brunt of the punishment. When students are not in class, primarily due to suspensions, they miss out on instruction, placing them further behind. Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera (2010) postulated, recurrent suspensions leads students to become disengaged in the learning process, increasing the chances of academic failure (p. 60). Thus, academic success will not be of value, posing the student's academic life to be in jeopardy. Knowing this, makes it harder for African American males to debunk the myths they face when it comes to their educational success.

In a society where equality is not the norm, African American males typically get left behind. Davis (2003) asserted, although African American girls are negatively impacted in regarding academic achievement, African American males are impacted more, placing a greater demand for strategic action and special interventions (p. 520). The picture painted of African American males regarding the test score gap is discouraging and incomplete. The spotlight is always on the underachievers; however, more research is needed to depict the African American males that exist in African American communities that can identify their shortcomings and seek

the necessary assistance (Fantuzzo, et al., 2012). At an early age, African American males in some cases, struggle due to family structure, environmental factors such as poverty, and predetermined defeat of the educational system.

Barbarin (2010) stressed, early on, that a vast number of African American boys are bombarded with a range of traumas that alters them onto a developmental curve filled with reluctant endings academically and socially (p. 82). Society cannot afford to label African American males and it be accepted. A stop must be put to this unnecessary way of thinking regarding African American males.

Yaffe (2012) alluded to middle school as the abandoned years (p. 11). During middle school, the developmental changes taking place physically, along with increased expectations academically, and taking steps toward independence can be overwhelming. Additionally, middle schoolers face higher demands on literacy skills, and those struggling, fall further behind, deeming school to be less important (Yaffe, 2012, p. 2). During this time of the developmental process, many demands are placed on students. Some Black boys come to school with no support at home, no value for education, no respect for teachers or administrators, no future plans, living in poverty, low academic achievement, discipline issues, and excessive absences. If they are not on grade level, they will fall behind with little chance of catching up with their counterparts. Yaffe (2012) explained:

Black boys are more likely than other students to have teachers who are unqualified to teach them. Middle school teachers seldom learn how to teach reading and writing effectively to Black boys because most instructors in teacher education programs do not know how to do it themselves. (p. 6)

Many African American students have not ventured out past their hometowns, so having a teacher who shares a similar background is key to broadening their horizons. Student exposure also contributes a huge part to the learning experience. Having a teacher that shares a similar background as their students is the key to opening new horizons for students. Many times, the only African American male role model that exist in schools are custodians, especially at the elementary and middle level. Until there is a shift in roles, many African American males may not reach their fullest potential, unless mentored by a strong male role model, who can lead by example.

Many interventions are available to provide students what they need to be successful. For example, youth mentoring programs have been implemented to aid students in certain deficit areas (i.e., excessive absences, low academic achievement, behavior/discipline issues, etc.). Rhodes, Liang, & Spencer (2009) asserted, within the past two decades, youth mentoring programs have grown. The number of young people with a mentor is up and continues to rise (p. 452). For many young people, mentoring has saved them from becoming a high school dropout.

Mentoring has been a prevalent intervention in schools and communities for many years. Since the inception of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America in 1904, thousands of youth have been mentored and changed for the better. Goldner & Mayseless (2009) suggested, the positive contributions acquired from organized mentoring programs gives way to the importance for more research. Resulting from its prevalence, an estimated five million American youth participate in such programs (p. 1339). More and more students are requiring the services of a youth mentoring program due to the various circumstances they face. Many of the mentoring agencies have wait lists because they have more youth than adult volunteers. Although youth mentoring is very important, not all adults are cut out to be a mentor. The relationship factor plays a vital role

in the success of the relationship between the mentee and mentor. The relationship must be balanced or else it will not last.

Rhodes (2002), author of “Stand By Me: The Risks and Rewards of Mentoring Today’s Youth” wrote, at the forefront of mentoring, mentor-mentee matches are being made daily. Although some programs have recently been established, over 15 percent have been in existence over fifteen years (p. 1). There is evidence that these youth mentoring programs are successful and are carrying out their purpose to help young people become successful whom may not otherwise achieve their potential due to resources and circumstances.

Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch (2000) stated, positive influences on youth have been gathered from program evaluations (p. 1662). Youth who are involved in mentoring programs are impacted in a positive way. Through the positive impact, they can be better citizens within their schools and communities. Having that one-on-one relationship with an older adult is all that some youth need. When youth know they have someone in their corner, they are more apt to strive for success. Rhodes (2002) made a valid point in saying, adolescents are quick to turn to the wrong sources for validation (p. 12). Those youth that are affected by their decision to turn to these tactics more than likely have a greater chance of turning things around for themselves if they encounter a caring adult who is willing to help them. Mentors can help mentees change their thought process and begin to see themselves as someone who can do anything they put their minds to.

The impact mentoring has on society is very valuable. For some youth, if they had not encountered a mentor when they did, they may not enjoy the success that they have been able to achieve.

Problem Statement

Knowing the effects of quality mentoring relationships are important, but it is even more important to know how it affects attendance and behavior and discipline for African American males. Understanding how quality mentoring affects these variables can help mentoring programs become more effective in their goal to help students succeed. Research is available to show how students have made gains participating in mentoring programs. With the number of mentoring programs present, more attention should be given to the relationship quality and these factors.

African American youth are struggling at high levels with poverty, lack of resources, low academic achievement, social and behavior issues, drug use, and poor attendance in school, all which lead to the increased potential of becoming a dropout. When students become so overwhelmed with life, that it negatively influences their academics, they tend to get behind in school. Research clearly indicated that African American youth living in impoverished environments are at a greater risk than more affluent African American and Caucasian youth for various types of problems (Carswell, Hanlon, O'Grady, Watts, & Pothong, 2009). With this alarming statistic, the sooner these factors are identified is the best time to step in to save a youth.

Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts & Boyd (2009) noted, creating a school environment where expectations are set high for Black male students and celebrated when achieved, while including in any interventions in place supporting the student is necessary for future research. Additionally, establishing ways to bridge the academic gaps Black males face during critical transition periods in their school career is essential (p. 287).

Hucks (2011) concluded in his study:

Research is needed to delve deeper into the school experiences of African American boys to gain a clearer understanding of their experiences within the classroom and school.

More research is also needed that captures and portrays notable models of schools where shared frameworks of achievement theory are being used (p. 353).

The problem is, not enough current research is available pertaining to the relationship of quality mentoring relationships on attendance and behavior and cumulative grade point average in African American male students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if a measurable relationship existed between the quality of mentoring relationships and attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average in African American male students. A positive quality relationship indicates increased attendance and improved behavior, and cumulative grade point average of African American male students. This quantitative study sought to determine if a relationship existed between a quality mentoring relationship (criterion variable) and the predictor variables of attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average of African American male students. The criterion variable, quality mentoring relationship was the overall satisfaction of the mentoring relationship shared between mentor and mentee (Fair, Hopkins, & Decker, 2012). The predictor variables in this study were attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average. Regular attendance is defined as five or fewer school days missed per year (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). Behavior is defined as something that a person does that can be observed, measured, and repeated (Bicard, S. & Bicard, D., 2012). Cumulative point average is defined as an indicator of school performance and achievement (Hallfors, et al., 2002). This quantitative study involved male teacher mentors and mentors from mentoring agencies in the Upstate of

South Carolina. The mentors were 18 and older. The gap in the literature was addressed by evaluating the predictive variables to determine the relationship between the quality of mentoring on attendance, behavior and accumulative grade point average of African America male students. The gap in the literature was addressed by conducting research on the relationship quality mentoring relationships had on attendance and behavior, and cumulative grade point average of African American males. The information gathered from the study sought to close the gap and provide research and evidence in how quality mentoring relationships positively or negatively affects attendance and behavior, and cumulative grade point average in African American male students.

Significance of the Study

Adolescents go through many changes. They deal with finding themselves along with many other things. At this point in their lives, the academic arena should become the most important thing to them; however, that is not the case for them all. Most families in America have always taught their children to stay in school and get a good job and be able to take care of themselves. This is difficult for students who do not have support from home, lack necessary resources, and have no identification with academics. This study is important because it can offer insight into the impact mentoring has on at-risk adolescent youth. This is a very critical developmental stage in the life of a child. To know and understand more about this developmental stage will help adults better serve the youth that they work with.

This study examined at the relationship between quality mentoring relationships and attendance and behavior, and cumulative grade point average of African American males. Furthermore, this study will be beneficial to the education sector, as well as the private sector, and various organizations within the United States. It will add more knowledge to the body of

research available on mentoring. The data gathered in this study will help prove that a correlation exists between quality mentoring relationships and attendance and behavior, and cumulative grade point average among African American males. Where this quantitative study fell short, it can possibly be replicated to expound upon the current thoughts and ideas. It is important to know the reasons behind African American male students missing excessive days and accumulating discipline referrals and low achievement, along with the benefits of a youth mentoring program.

Research has shown the goal of mentoring programs is to match youth with caring adults to assist them through developmental hardships (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011). School-based and community-based mentoring is very prevalent in society. Many students take advantage of both; however, more students are served through community-based programs. Herrera, et al (2011) emphasized some of the positive results gathered from studying traditional community-based mentoring programs of various aspects of youth's social and academic development (p. 347). Finally, this study showed how quality mentoring relationships positively relates to increasing attendance and behavior, and cumulative grade point average of African American males in grades six through eight.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and attendance among African American males?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and behavior among African American males?

RQ3: Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and cumulative grade point average among African American males?

Definitions

1. *Mentoring*- Mentoring is the pairing of a youth to a non-parental adult figure who can serve as a role model and provide support for youth (Anastasia, Skinner & Mundhenk, 2012, p. 38).
2. *At-risk*- At-risk refers to those students who exhibit academic, behavioral, or attitudinal problems that lead to school dropout (Lemon & Waston, 2011, p. 17).
3. *Youth mentoring*-Youth mentoring is defined as a relationship between mentor and mentee; however, mentors often enter home, school, and other community settings associated with the youth they serve and interact regularly with other people in mentees' lives (Lakind, Atkins, & Eddy, 2015, p. 52).
4. *Adolescent*- Adolescent refers to the span of an individual life between the onset of puberty and the completion of bone growth (Cormelius, 1993, p. 47).
5. *School-based learning (SBM)*- School-based mentoring defined as one-on-one mentoring with a community volunteer, meeting weekly for one hour during the school day with an assigned mentor (Henry, 2009, p. 46).
6. *Community-based learning (CBM)* is one-on-one mentoring where children are paired with caring adults based on interests, personalities, and distance between each other. They meet weekly within the community between 4 and 8 hours per week (Henry, 2009, p. 46).
7. *Achievement gap*- Achievement gap is defined those disparities between African American and Caucasian students (White, 2009, p. 1).
8. *Quality mentoring relationships*- quality mentoring relationships can be defined as the mechanism by which noted improvements occur in the mentee and can be referred

to as the closeness, satisfaction, or engagement of a dyadic mentor-mentee relationship (Fair, Hopkins, & Decker, 2012, p. 108).

9. *Regular Attendance*- Regular attendance is defined as five or fewer school days missed per year (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014, p. 2).
10. *Behavior*- Behavior is defined as something that a person does that can be observed, measured, and repeated (Bicard, S. & Bicard, D, 2012, p. 3).
11. *Cumulative Grade Point Average*- Cumulative grade point average is defined as an indicator of school performance and achievement (Hallfors, D., et al., 2002, p. 206).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter will provide an overview discussing the historical background for this correlational research study, a detailed theoretical framework connecting the conceptual background guiding this study, a literature section that will review current literature on mentoring and how it relates to quality mentoring relationships and its effects on attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average, and a summary section highlighting some of the positive outcomes of mentoring African American males.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this correlational study is built upon the social learning theory, social cognitive learning theory, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Together, these theories provide the foundation for this correlational study. Within a mentor dyad, social learning is evident through the mentor modeling positive behaviors. Social cognitive learning theory focuses on how one learns. Lastly, every adolescent has basic needs that must be met for them to establish a sense of self-actualization. Through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, mentors can move adolescents from meeting their basic needs to self-actualization.

Social Learning Theory

Bandura, also known as the father of the social learning theory, introduced the concept of social learning. Nabavi (2011) defined social learning theory as, "an essential component of sustainable natural resource management and the promotion of desirable behavioral change" (p. 5). A mentoring relationship is designed to provide positive behavioral outcomes; however, some negative behavioral outcomes exist. His theory is useful in this correlational study because he believed the environment was most influential on how people learn and that learning takes

place through interacting with others in a social setting (Smith, 2017; Nabavi, 2011). Social learning and mentoring both highlight the social aspect of interaction between two people. Through a mentoring relationship, mentors provide social learning opportunities to take place for the mentee to understand how to conduct themselves. Mentoring is directly related to interactions and their outcome on behaviors. Bandura is also credited for discovering the idea of modeling on student learning. Smith (2017) pointed out, the more characteristics the learner and model share, the more likely imitation will take place (p. 4). Bandura postulated, modeling involves the identical actions of motor activities displayed (Nabavi, 2011). It is highly likely that a learner will imitate the behavior of a model if a close relationship exists between the two parties (Smith, 2017).

Nonparental relationships are highly noteworthy relationships developed between children and adults (Goldner & Mayseless, 2009). In mentoring relationships, time is an essential factor. Social learning theory has been known to be the leading theory of learning and development (Nabavi, 2011). Defined, learning is acquiring knowledge by cognition (Miller, 2011). Three general principles of social learning theory exist that intertwine with mentoring, showing how people learn: “observation, imitation, and modeling” (Nabavi, 2011, p.6). One of the most noted influences of social learning is imitation. It is second nature to imitate repeated, positive behaviors through reinforcement (Miller, 2011). Children will exhibit behavior changes through reinforcement after the mentor has modeled appropriate behaviors allowing mentees to combine all modeled behaviors to form more concrete ones (Miller, 2011).

Through mentoring relationships, the mentor sets the example for the mentee to model. Social learning theory is the vehicle by which mentors can model and express the importance of coming to school daily, being well-behaved for student success to take place in hopes to change

their mentee's "attitudes and beliefs and possibly their behavior;" Furthermore, this theory stresses role modeling and its effect on academic achievement in a program intended to better mentee's scholastic results (Linnehan, 2001).

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura expanded his social learning theory into social cognitive learning theory, which lays the foundation for understanding, predicting, and changing human behavior (Nabavi, 2011). Through observational learning, necessary skills for social interaction are acquired (Devi, Khandelwal, & Das, 2017). Various studies have shown how modeling impacts the effect of learned behaviors (Devi, Khandelwal, & Das, 2017). Observational learning is at the forefront of social cognitive theory occurring when observation of a model by students takes place expounding students' mastery and comprehension (Devi, Khandelwal, & Das, 2017). Observation and modeling can be effective when trying to bring forth positive behaviors.

Mentors use social cognitive learning theory throughout their match with their mentees. Mentees count on their mentor to always do what is right. Mentors serve as models while mentees serve as observers. Through their observations, they determine what is and is not acceptable based on their mentors' behavior while mentally formulating what has been observed, providing development of later behaviors (Devi, Khandelwal, & Das, 2017). Students learn to manage their behavior and emotions through observational learning (Devi, Khandelwal, & Das, 2017). The relationship between the mentor and mentee will be a determining factor in whether the mentee decides to imitate their mentor. Smith (2017) postulated, when closeness exists between the model and observer, the more likely it is for imitation to take place (p. 4). This theory is interwoven in this correlational study since mentoring programs strive to positively impact its participants by matching them with mentors whom they have something in common

with while increasing self-efficacy of its mentees to achieve goals that have been set.

Additionally, at the core of mentoring and the social cognitive learning theory is “the social context of learning” (Devi, Khandelwal, & Das, 2017).

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham H. Maslow, an American psychologist, focused on human motivation, what motivated humans, and their needs. Maslow's motivational theory rests on the idea that human behavior is controlled through a limited number of developing essential needs which operate in a fixed sequence (Sengupta, 2011). Through his theory of motivation, Maslow began his study of the principle of human nature, which is based on the universal approach. At the center of Maslow’s motivational theory lies the hierarchy of basic needs (Sengupta, 2011). Cornelius (1993) outlined the five steps necessary for an individual to reach self-actualization, which include: physiological needs, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Schools can make this happen by strengthening, rather than impeding, the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs of students (p. 48). His influential theory proposes that children must first have their basic needs satisfied before other needs can be met (Noltemeyer, Bush, Patton, & Bergen, 2012).

A study conducted by Noltemeyer, Bush, Patton, & Bergen (2012) revealed, specific outcomes were positively linked to an increase of safety and love/belonging, those needs which can sometimes go unmet (p. 1866). Known as basic needs, youth cannot afford to have those needs unmet. To progress from one domain to another, the needs must be fully met. Once self-actualization is met, the youth can reach its fullest potential, the goal of mentoring. The mentor serves as a caring adult striving to ensure their mentee’s needs are met from basic to self-fulfilling needs. When needs go unmet, it makes it that much more difficult for students to

attend school regularly, behave like a model student, and achieve success. The study also showed that having access to health care benefits will decrease the likelihood of students missing school because preventative measures are in place to avoid absenteeism; however, those students who lack proper healthcare benefits tend to be affected most academically and through attendance (Noltemeyer, et al. 2012). This theory relates to this correlational study by detailing the importance of all needs being met for positive results to take place. Additionally, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and mentoring mesh due to both having a holistic approach of the whole person.

Related Literature

Effects of Mentoring

Research has shown the many effects mentoring has on youth. In an impact study on Big Brothers Big Sisters by Grossman & Tierney (1998), found drug and alcohol use among mentees was highly unlikely while being more in tune to school, showing up daily, receiving good grades, and having more positive relationships than prior to participating in the program (p. 422).

Annastasia, Skinner, & Mundhenk (2012) asserted, the gaps surround mentoring and mentoring programs are evident. Well-established goals and overall program structure in the beginning will allow for prosperous mentor-mentee matches leading to measurable outcomes to assist the program in aiding the youth it serves. The mentors' commitment to the program and respect are tell-tell signs of success (p. 43).

Thompson & Kelly-Vance (2001) reported over five million young people were not on grade level and subject to dropping out of school due to various indicators including, "race and ethnicity, low expectations, low grades, low test scores, truancy, retention in early grades, family in poverty, low parental education, and early involvement in other high-risk behaviors" (p. 228).

The term “at-risk” was used to define a certain population of students and can be used in numerous ways. Thompson & Kelly-Vance (2001) defined at-risk as “increased likelihood over base rates in the population that a particular outcome will occur.” He referred to at-risk behaviors as those activities in which youth engage that increase the likelihood of adverse psychological, social, and health consequences. Thompson & Kelly-Vance (2001) defined it as “applying to young people who are at risk for not maturing into responsible adults” (p. 228); Johnson & Lampley (2010) defined it as “having one or more of the characteristics: retention in grade level, poor attendance, behavioral problems, low SES or poverty, violence, low achievement, substance abuse, or teenage pregnancy; (p. 64) and Lemon & Watson (2011), defined it as those students who exhibit behaviors leading to school dropout (p. 17). Many descriptors are used to classify students who are “at-risk.” For example, Nunn & Parish (1992) and Thompson & Kelly-Vance (2001) found:

At-risk students had a history of unexcused absences and tardiness, were significantly below average in school performance, had behavioral and disciplinary problems, had less self-confidence as a learner, had a locus of control that was more externally oriented, and desired a more informal and non-traditional approach to learning (p. 228).

Hickman & Wright (2011) reported, in the United States, approximately one-third of all students are labeled at risk for academic decline (p. 25). At-risk behaviors can lead to students dropping out of school. Due to numerous factors, school becomes less important. Gallagher (2002) deemed dropouts as a group overrepresented by minorities, males, and non-native English speakers often held back early on and have running records of severe absences and/or truancy. They tend not to follow the rules and are not afraid to go against the grain, they are loners, and do not fit the educational puzzle (p. 38).

Considerable amounts of studies have sought to determine the causes of students dropping out of school. Numerous causes have been studied and determined within related literature and empirical studies. Suh & Suh (2007) cited in their study the determining factors most influential in students dropping out were: lack of school engagement, poor academic success, not on grade level, no relationship with teachers, education level of parents or lack thereof, household inhabitants, and no motivation leading to academic defeat, low socioeconomic status, and behavioral problems, all equally impacting the dropout rate (p. 297, 302).

Within the last few years, South Carolina's dropout rate has decreased. From 2007-2012, the number of dropouts decreased from 8000 to 5000 (South Carolina Department of Education, 2013). A significant decrease credits mentoring programs within South Carolina school districts along with other effective strategies. Early intervention is necessary to help students stay on track and graduate on time. Although faced with extenuating circumstances, if at-risk youth are caught in time, mentoring could result in increased success. Implementation of interventions must begin at the first sign of risk (Suh & Suh, 2007).

In the United States, graduation rates are estimated to average between 70% and 80% nationally. However, for some schools, specifically schools in urban and poor contexts, graduation rates drop to as low as 50% or less. Since the 1970s, many demographic factors have been associated with the dropout rate including increased rates of drop out among males, African Americans, Hispanics, low socioeconomic (SES) families, as well as schools in urban and rural contexts (Bowers, Sprott, & Taff, 2013, p. 77). Suh & Suh notated the dropout rate according to number of risks of students; one risk, 17.1%, two risks, 32.5%, and three risks, 47.7% (p. 303). Risks weigh very heavily in terms of the dropout rate suggesting a closer look at the culprits of

each risk. African American students suffer more than any other ethnic group when it comes to dropping out. Shannon & Bylsma (2006) stated, minorities in comparison to Whites are at a much higher risk of dropping out nationally and in Washington State (p. 16). These statistics indicate the need for programs to assist affected students and their families as early as possible.

Research has demonstrated repeatedly that on average, in comparison to graduates, drop outs were more likely to experience higher rates of unemployment and incarceration and lower overall lifetime earnings and life expectancy (Bowers, Spratt, & Taff, 2013, p. 77). The struggles are much greater for high school dropouts than graduates. In a study where factors for school dropout and juvenile delinquency was studied, Palmore (1963) highlighted the top four factors associated with school dropouts: type of neighborhood, frequent moves, intercourse, and intelligence (p. 5). Socioeconomic status could be the number one reason students drop out of school, as it is very difficult to maintain with minimal resources. Trying to come to school each day and keep up in class can be quite challenging for students in this predicament. The study also revealed that males had a higher rate of dropping out than females. There were 15 percent more dropouts among boys than girls. The Census also found a much higher rate of dropouts among boys. According to Palmore (1963), boys are more inclined to drop out than girls (p. 5). The study also found intelligence was a factor associated with dropping out. Of the students who leave school before graduation, over half are considered below-average (Palmore, 1963, p. 5-6). Low achievement and intelligence are related and have a significant impact on the dropout rate.

A study conducted by Torrance (1984) and Thompson & Kelly-Vance (2001) pointed out, having a mentor was linked to completing more years of education. More specifically, men with a mentor completed 2.8 more years compared to men without a mentor. Women with a mentor completed 3.2 more years compared to women without a mentor (p. 230). Another

study of Big Brothers Big Sisters by Tierney (1995) showed that involvement in a mentoring program decreased the likelihood of skipping classes or missing days of school. Students who had mentors skipped and missed fewer days. A greater impact was seen in girls involved in the program than those in the control group. An additional finding was that girls in the treatment group had better grades than girls in the control group (Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001, p. 232).

Quality Mentoring Relationships. Relationship quality can be the determining factor in the mentor-mentee relationship. Fair, Hopkins, & Decker (2012) concluded, mentees' perspectives on interpersonal relationships are impacted and can positively change other relationships (p. 108). Students involved in mentoring can be impacted positively or negatively depending on the quality of their mentoring relationship. The first two months of the match is a critical time for developing the potential cohesiveness the match offers.

Goldner & Mayseless (2009) shed light on the quality of mentoring relationships and its effects on the success of the relationship. Their findings revealed, "Qualities of the mentoring relationship were also associated with perceived mentoring contribution to learning skills, social support and wellbeing reported by protégé. Additionally, closeness in the mentoring relationship serves as an important mechanism for protégé improvement in adjustment" (Goldner & Mayseless 2009, p. 1345). According to Eby et al. (2013), the amount of time spent is an indicator that allows mentees to get the most from their experience with their mentor. Regular contact deemed mentoring beneficial to stimulating loyalty and solidarity in various settings, particularly for those in the minority, likely to feel separated from larger social institutions (p. 467).

Mentors are responsible for growing, developing, and sustaining close, genuine one-on-one relationships with their mentees and conveying support and guidance to the mentee

(Lankind, Atkins & Eddy, 2015; Thomson & Zand, 2010). Their role goes beyond the community. Lakind et al. (2015) determined from their study that a close relationship is necessary between mentees and their mentor. Additionally, they found that a relationship with those close to the mentees were necessary for the match to be successful (p. 58). In a study by Goldner & Maysless (2009), a model was suggested regarding the role of different qualities within the dyadic relationship that correlates to the success of the match. It was noted how negative views held of the mentee and their relationships with adults can be changed through a compassionate friendship with a caring adult (p. 1340).

Factors associated with quality mentoring relationships. Many factors play an integral part of quality mentoring relationships. Duration, frequency and consistency of contact, connection, and the mentors' approach all influence quality mentoring relationships. "The benefits of a long-term relationship outweigh the alternative. Often deficits occur when relationships end prematurely" (Deutsch & Spencer, 2009, p. 51). The truest determinant of quality shows in how long the match has lasted. Careful consideration of those factors are instrumental to match duration within and across relationships can also shed light regarding the characteristics of effective matches (Deutsch & Sanchez, 2009, p. 51).

When a mentee knows when to expect interaction with their mentor is common to quality mentoring relationships. Not being let down and able to count on a mentor helps establish trust, a necessary attribute for a successful match relationship to take place and last, providing mentors the opportunity to spend more time regularly with their mentee while becoming more involved in their mentee's life, allowing for positive outcomes (Deutsch & Sanchez, 2009). The lasting support from a mentor may keep mentees on the pathway of success.

When a mentoring dyad has a connection, it yields positive outcomes. All mentor-mentee dyads should have the goal of making a connection in the early stages of the match. Connection helps establish a bond and closeness within the match, which helps mentors become significant in the life of their mentee. Deutsch & Sanchez (2009) noted, “only 40% of youth in a formal mentoring program, without hesitation, nominated their mentor as a significant adult” (p. 52). Having a connection with a mentor can have positive effects on a mentee’s perception of the world around them.

The way the mentor approaches the relationship can affect it; positively or negatively. According to Deutsch and Sanchez (2009), when a developmental approach was taken, the mentee was more satisfied with their mentor-mentee relationship and felt a closeness with their mentor. Allowing the mentee to see the real side of the mentor is critical in developing a quality mentoring relationship. Showing empathy and trying to understand the mentee from their perspective shows the mentor cares for and is seeking to get a true sense of who the mentee really is (Deutsch & Sanchez, 2009). This opens lines of communication within the match and helps break down any barriers that may exist, while forming respect between both parties. Knowing the mentor cares puts the mentee at ease making them more comfortable knowing they have a supportive and caring adult on their side.

The benefits of mentoring are many as discovered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). Some of the findings of a recent study included boys participating in mentoring had a lessened chance of peer pressure and they disregarded how others viewed them (Mental Health, 2013). DuBois & Neville (1997) found the duration of the match was significant in the mentees outcome (p. 233). Other findings of benefits included mentoring participants had a positive outlook on school and compared to non-participants they portrayed

positive conducts (Mental Health, 2013). Rhodes and DuBois (2008) identified benefits to include better results relating to education and work, mental health, problem behavior and overall health. These results are possible due to the foundation of close-knit, lasting networks that support positive developmental change (p. 254, 257). Goldner & Mayseless (2009) asserted, by being someone the mentee can look up to and an advocate for them can positively impact the identity development of the mentee (p. 140). Robert S. Brown (1995), author of *Mentoring At-Risk Students: Challenges and Potential*, affirmed, a benefit of mentoring is increased self-concept, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Mentoring steers youth in the direction of autonomy (p. 5-6). One study pointed out “how mentors can have an effect positively on their mentee in all aspects while improving relationships with others (Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000; Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000). The goal of most at-risk mentoring programs is to ultimately eliminate unwanted behaviors, specifically in attendance. Better attendance harvests higher marks, fewer course failures, and better student results (Brown, 1995). Such findings can point us in the direction for more youth to take advantage of such a program that will benefit them during the daunting stages of development.

Challenges, or negative outcomes, often are the result of some mentoring relationships. Jean E. Rhodes (2002) explained how many students from single-parent homes struggle to keep a mentor due to frequent moves (p. 57). Lack of time and loss of interest in either party can cause mentoring relationships to end prematurely. Other reasons for early termination of mentoring relationships concluded by Rhodes (2002):

Adolescents may terminate relationships in response to what they perceive as unsupportive or judgmental mentors; relationships diminish in competition with youth’s blossoming romances or friendships or extra-curricular activities; the youth’s family or

friends may pressure them to quit due to feelings of inferiority by the changes they see; volunteers quite due to fear of failure or because of a perceived lack of effort or appreciation from the mentee; many mentors realize the personal commitment required exceeds their expectations, particularly when it takes them away from work and family; mentors have unrealistic expectations; mentors may withdraw from the relationship due to the mentees home life or their emotional needs; some relationships lack the necessities needed to thrive. (p. 57-58)

Closeness, trust, and intimacy are all necessities for a successful mentoring relationship; however, the mentees need for extreme closeness may hinder the success of the relationship (Goldner & Mayseless, 2009). Some mentees require more attention than others and should be noted at the time of the match. The objective of a successful mentor-mentee match is for the mentee to gain a sense of independence while improving their functioning. This takes place when the quality of the relationship has been formed over a time (Goldner & Mayseless, 2009).

Youth turn to mentoring programs in hopes to establish positive relationships. Many have been through so much in their short lives, they are looking for an attachment figure. The need for an attachment figure comes from disrupted relationships within the mentees home life. Time is a key factor in helping mentor relationships last. According to Rhodes (2002), nearly half of all mentoring matches end after a few short months (p. 57). The less time a mentor can offer, the less attached the mentee will become; however, when mentors put in the necessary time, relationships can still wither. When attachments are broken, it can cause negative emotions to surface (Zilberstein & Spencer, 2014). All youth are not able to tolerate relationships ending prematurely. For some, they find closure and move forward while others cannot. Those that cannot find closure suffer a great deal, leaving them vulnerable and distressed. Unexpected or

turbulent endings can cause harm (Zilberstein & Spencer, 2014). With the many issues youth are faced with today, ending the relationship abruptly causes more damage than letting it phase out on its own. Zilberstein & Spencer (2014) asserted, terminations leaving the mentee with a sense of purpose rather than without allows the mentee the necessary tools that enables the mentee to move forward with another mentor (p. 5).

Terminating a mentor/mentee relationship abruptly can be challenging for the mentee. Zilberstein & Spencer (2014) asserted in their findings, relationships ending harshly puts the mentee in a bad place, oftentimes, steering them away from future matches (p. 7). Bringing closure to the relationship is most helpful to the mentee; otherwise, it puts the mentee in a bad place and may hinder them from reaching their fullest potential. The duration of the relationship is a necessary component of a mentoring program that can have positive and negative effects on mentees. Findings reported that a drop, in youth recognition of their academic excellence and self-worth decreased due to early termination of their mentor relationship (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Lakind, Eddy & Zell, 2014). Spencer (2007) found six themes in her research related to premature endings of a relationship which included, match abandonment, low motivation, false sense of hope, lack of mentor relational skills, including the inability to fill the gaps regarding cultural divides, family interruptions, and lack of support from the agency (p. 339). These findings, with more research, can provide insight in better establishing mentoring programs to yield results that are more positive.

Factors Impacting Student Success. Many factors within the educational setting can have a tremendous impact on a student's success. Shannon & Bylsma (2006) listed school-related factors as, disconnect between home and school, inadequate discipline, inadequate counseling, unfavorable school climate, no compatible curriculum, retentions/suspensions, and

low expectations gathered from The National Dropout Prevention Center (Shannon & Bylsma, 2006, p. 4). As argued in other reports, contemporary schools generally reflect the majority culture causing students of different cultural and economic backgrounds to feel unwanted, which leads to negative outcomes (Shannon & Bylsma, 2006). Shannon & Bylsma (2006) declared, children are forced to choose sides resulting in schools highlighting the values of the majority culture (p. 27). Minority students feel less important than others because they have no connection with their school. According to some studies, many African American students prefer learning situations that incorporate all learning styles and modalities (Shannon & Bylsma, 2006). Shannon & Bylsma (2006) pointed out, schools need to be restructured to include all students (p. 5). In an article, *The Brotherhood: Empowering Adolescent African-American Males Toward Excellence*, Shelby Wyatt (2009) emphasized, Black males and White males experience of adolescence are not the same. Young Black males, as suggested through literature reviews, are developmentally challenged due to various life circumstances (p. 463). Such circumstances effect Black males' point-of-view regarding school and teachers, which hinders their success. A quality relationship with a caring adult who identifies with the youth can help shape their perspective and help alter negative behaviors.

Dropout related to family. Studies have demonstrated a high correlation between dropping out and certain personal characteristics, including both social and academic factors. Dropping out is linked to varied negative outcomes (Shannon & Bylsma, 2006). When deciding between the lesser of the two evils, oftentimes, dropout prevails. Personal factors intertwined with other factors puts students more at a disadvantage.

Most students turn to their family when important decisions need to be made or when a crisis arises. Others leave it up to themselves to make decisions because they have no family

support. The dropout rate is highly associated with circumstances of family. According to Shannon & Bylsma (2006), youth in single-parent or poverty-stricken homes, whose families frequently move, resulting in life-altering situations, or have a family history of dropouts are more prone for dropping out (p. 24). Since dropping out is a recurring trend in certain families, it is hard to break the cycle; however, in some cases, students can defy the odds and become successful. “Family socioeconomic level bears by far the strongest relation to dropout; but family structure, mother’s age, family stress and maternal employment also enhance or reduce dropout risk, along with other academic and personal resources,” concluded in a long-term study of dropouts in Baltimore, known as the Beginning School Study (Shannon & Bylsma, 2006).

In 1993, the Casey Foundation reported that students from impoverished families are at a much higher risk of dropping out of school compared to those from well-established homes. Males and females from families in the lowest SES quartile are more than likely to drop out of school than those in the highest quartile (Shannon & Bylsma, 2006). It is evident that males suffer far more than females when regarding dropping out.

Poverty. In the United States, poverty is very prevalent. Known to have the highest child poverty rate among developed countries, the United States has 22% of its children classified as poor (Wood, 2003). According to White (2009), compared to other racial groups, poverty is more prevalent in African Americans. In 2005, research showed a 20% difference in African American and White children under the age of 18 living in poverty, in which African American children were affected most (p. 2). Many of these children show up in schools each year, not knowing what the next minute may hold for them. Because of poverty, many students will end up dropping out of school. Wood (2003) postulated a relationship between poverty and educational level of parent(s), which further factors into the culture of deprivation that poor

children experience (p. 707). Environmental factors contribute to poverty. In recent years, the child poverty rate has significantly increased primarily because of the following trends outlined by Wood (2003), decreased real value of wages earned by lower educated workers; income-transfer programs (welfare/TANF) support has decreased in real value; increased numbers of single-parent, female-headed families (p. 708).

With multiple risk factors of poverty, it makes the outlook on life more dismal for the poor, causing more issues. Wood (2003) concluded his study by saying, without economic supports and interventions, many of these children will be caught in an unending cycle of hardship and anguish, striving for survival in the world's richest country (p. 711).

Poverty can be a critical circumstance that robs children of reaching their fullest potential. Children living in poverty often lag their peers cognitively and academically, while some are affected emotionally and behaviorally. Brooks-Gunn & Duncan (1997) suggested from a study that earlier in life is when the effects of poverty affect cognitive development in children (p. 61). Lacour & Tissington (2011) postulated a 47% difference in rank on assessments between poor students and those from a middle to upper income household (p. 522). More importantly, the duration of poverty is impactful. The longer a child is exposed the greater the effects (p. 61). Linked to poverty and negative outcomes is family income. Families living at or below the poverty line struggle to make ends meet causing important needs to go unmet. Although a hard cycle to break, students living in poverty still have a chance at success with the right support system in place.

Negative behaviors such as emotional and behavioral problems can stem from poverty. Children exhibiting externalizing behaviors typically are aggressive, fight, and act out, while those exhibiting internalizing behaviors are more anxious, socially withdrawn, and depressed

(Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 2011). Brooks-Gunn & Duncan (2011) documented two different studies finding persistence of poverty to be notable evidence of some behavioral problems. One study concluded, those living in long-term poverty displayed more problem behaviors than those above the poverty line. Additional findings identified children displayed more behavioral problems after one year of poverty as opposed to those who had lived in poverty much longer (p. 3).

Sense of belonging. Shannon & Bylsma (2006) suggested, making students feel welcomed and a part of the learning process can be the starting point to help them stay in school. Tailoring schools to students' needs will help create the necessary change for students and educators. Using relevant curriculum and effective instruction will increase student engagement and decrease the want to drop out (p. 5). Schools' curriculum should reflect each student, no matter their background. It should be a comprehensive program for all students.

Out-of-school programs serve various student groups and differ in goals and program components (Shannon & Bylsma, 2006, p. 62). One out-of-school program with excellent results is Communities in Schools, which focuses on five basic principles. Its mission is ...to champion the connection of needed community resources with schools, to help young people successfully learn, stay in school and prepare for life (Shannon (Bylsma, 2006). Communities in Schools is a national organization and is housed in many states. The data from this program is exceptionally good. The greater the results of the program, the greater impact it has on the students and adults involved. Shannon & Bylsma (2006) detailed in its annual report for 2001-2002, reported gains in attendance, behavior, and academic achievement. A 72% increase in attendance, 81% decrease in discipline referrals, 78% increase in academic performance, and a 3% dropout rate were reported for those students tracked through Community in Schools (p. 63).

Teacher engagement and training. In an article, *Middle School Matters: Improving the Life Course of Black Boys*, Deborah Yaffe (2012) asserted, adults must equip Black males with the necessary tools to shield them from negativity while schools provide changes to ensure their success (p.3). Additionally, teacher education programs, must add a component to their programs to prepare teachers to educate students from diverse backgrounds” (Yaffe, 2012). More than anything, real, genuine, knowledgeable, highly skilled teachers, regardless of gender and race, have a profound impact on the results of Black males (Yaffe, 2012). Black boys are capable of learning just as much as others. Do not water down instruction but make it relevant and meaningful to them (Yaffe, 2012, p. 9). Many creative ways exist to making learning fun, interesting, and relevant.

School attendance. Regular school attendance is necessary for students’ success. Kearney & Graczyk (2014) declared, regular school attendance is associated with better performance on high stakes tests and overall grades (p. 2). Regular attendance has been defined as 5 or fewer school days missed per year (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). Conversely, school absenteeism has become an issue in recent years. Problematic absenteeism has been defined as “missing at least 25% of total school time for at least two weeks, severe difficulty attending classes for at least two weeks with significant interference in a youth’s or family’s daily routine, and/or absences for at least 10 days of school during any 15-week period while school is in session, with an absence defined as 25% or more of school time missed” (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014, p. 2). Although linked to eventual dropout, other negative correlates of chronic absenteeism include hazardous behaviors such as substance abuse, violence, suicide attempt, risky sexual behavior, pregnancy, delinquency-related behaviors, injury, and illness (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014).

DeSocio, VanCura, Nelson, Hewitt, Kitzman, & Cole (2007) defined truancy as “unexcused absences from school or classes and is ranked among the top ten problems facing schools across the country” (p. 3). DeSocio et al. (2007) claimed, “School disengagement represents a point of developmental divergence for as many as 30% of youth who are absent on any given school day and 9% who drop out before completing high school” (p. 3). Various health issues are related to school absenteeism. Poor school attendance and academic difficulties may send up red flags that health-related issues are present (DeSocio et al., 2007). In a recent study, it was reported youth disengaged in school are at a higher risk of engaging in precarious behaviors jeopardizing their health. Additionally, a correlation between school problems and health risks was found in a nationally representative sample of over 10,000 youth (DeSocio et al., 2007).

Each year, data reveals pertinent information needed for growth. For certain students, attendance data depicts the trend of chronic absenteeism. The key to changing this paradigm is to catch it before it becomes a habit. Once the culprit is detected a plan must be implemented. In a recent *Education Week* commentary, it alluded to schools partnering with community members and families as a start to the student regularly attending school and recognize and discuss the demands prohibiting regular school attendance (Chang, Gomperts, & Boissiere, 2014). Partnerships are an avenue to creating student success. The more positive stakeholders involved, the greater chances for positive results.

Mentors are very helpful in trying to eliminate negative behaviors such as absenteeism. New York City implemented a mentoring program specifically for students who were habitually absent consisting of school personnel, school leaders, or other mentoring programs (Chang, Gomperts, & Boissiere, 2014). These type initiatives can be very rewarding. As with any

mentoring relationship, one or both parties are bound to be impacted for life. The mentors interacted with the students each day with encouraging words, they reached out to parents when the student was absent, they provided community resources to students and their families, were part of a data analysis team at the school, and they supported all students of the school (Chang, Gomperts, & Boissiere, 2014). Establishing a relationship with parents of students chronically absent helps mentors intervene and assist the parent with getting them to school daily.

The results of the program were indicative of the hard work put in by mentors, parents, students, and community members. The results showed:

Mentees gained nearly two weeks within the year by participating. Compared to similar students, mentees were more likely to continue their education and sustain their grades. The program was implemented in all New York City schools, with considerable significance on students from impoverished backgrounds. (Chung, Gomperts, & Boissiere, 2014)

Health concerns. A link between absenteeism and health problems have been detected. The coexistence of truancy with student and family mental health problems may be a clue of a mental health disorder already in existence or to come (DeSocio et al., 2007). In their study, DeSocio et al. (2007) revealed how making students the school's top priority while fostering relationships and establishing incentives for attendance, addressing student absences in the beginning, decreasing opportunities for punishment, and forming bonds with necessary agencies to speak with students and their families can be the starting point for ending truancy (p. 4).

Without intervention, truancy becomes a chronic pattern that increases with time (DeSocio et al., 2007, p. 9). The multifaceted intervention pilot program conducted by DeSocio et al. (2007) consisted of three parts: tutoring by the mentor, the mentor as an advocate, and the mentor providing support (p. 5). Mentoring is a strategy used to turn negatives to positives.

Discipline issues leading to suspension. Students show up to school tough on the outside, but broken on the inside, which may bring forth negative behaviors (Teske, 2011). Schools should be a haven for students, protecting them from trouble and prison. Oftentimes, this way of thinking is counterproductive when students are removed from the learning environment because of common teenage behavior (Teske, 2011, p. 88). Not being in the classroom due to in-school suspension (ISS) and/or out-of-school suspension (OSS) puts the student farther behind and puts them at a higher risk of antisocial and delinquent behaviors; however, school connectedness is associated with school attendance, graduation rates, and improved academics (Teske, 2011). Allen, Aber, & Leadbeater (1990) argued, to understand certain problem behaviors in adolescence, an examination of the central developmental tasks, if not met, along with the behaviors that create a strong and enduring risk of problematic behavior must be taken into consideration (p. 457).

The associate editor of *The Atlantic* asserted, suspending students who are already likely to fail or drop out could validate calamity (Wong, 2016). Creating alternatives to suspending students when they misbehave could potentially give sight to closing the discipline gap. To begin, the document “Research on School Suspension” referenced evidence on alternatives to suspensions to include:

Conducting a needs assessment of the school prior to implementation of certain programs to ensure they are tailored to the needs of the student, lowering suspensions through school-wide changes addressing students and the entire school while offering positive reinforcement, the use of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports throughout the school, conflict resolution throughout the school that emphasizes positive options against violence to name a few. (Iselin, 2010).

As of 2014, the United States Department of Education documented procedures to hinder schools from issuing suspensions and expulsions, but rather center disciplinary efforts on novice evidence-based models (Gutierrez, 2016). Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) may be the ticket to decreasing suspensions while increasing student achievement. Evidence is available to show the positive impact PBIS has on student behavior compared to suspensions.

Research showed, of the students suspended, 30% - 50% are repeat offenders, showing its ineffectiveness to diminish misbehavior, but rather promote it (Owen, Wettach, & Hoffman, 2015). When students are suspended, they perceive it as a holiday, but also not being helpful and more likely to be suspended again (Iselin, 2010). Lack of supervision while being suspended increases the chances of students misbehaving outside of school. Additionally, it can put a strain on families causing parents to be away from work losing income (Owen, Wettach, & Hoffman, 2015; Gutierrez, 2016). The decision to remove a student from the learning environment is difficult for teachers because they know students will miss out on instruction. At that point, it affects the teacher, student, and parents (Gutierrez, 2016).

Keeping students in school is the primary goal of the education system. To stay in line with that, students must be present each day. Suspensions range from minor to more serious offenses. Owen, Wettach, & Hoffman (2015) noted, most suspensions stem from minute offenses as horseplay, attendance issues, foul language, insubordinate behavior, and disrupting class. Students receiving more serious infractions make up five percent of suspensions, while the other 95% originate from less serious infractions (p. 44). This statistic draws attention to the need for administrators to revisit disciplinary policies and implement new programs to increase student achievement.

With a myriad of factors contributing to suspensions, Owen, Wettach, & Hoffman (2015) outlined contributing factors other than the student to be: teacher attitudes, how a school is run, perceptions of success, socioeconomic and racial status. By far, race is the ultimate factor leading to suspension above student behavior and attitude (p. 44). The attitudes of the administration team within schools weighs very heavily regarding discipline. Principals that do not immediately revert to suspension tend to have lower suspension rates resulting in the use of preventative measures (Owen, Wettach, & Hoffman, 2015). More research should be conducted to study principals' perceptions of out-of-school suspensions and the school's discipline policies and procedures. Doing so may result in inconsistencies in discipline within schools of the same district.

In A Study of Zero Tolerance Policies in Schools: A Multi-Integral Systems Approach to Improve Outcomes for Adolescents, Teske (2011) found a way to address the culprit of and decrease negative behaviors resulting in referrals and out-of-school suspension by establishing alternatives and supplying community resources (p. 88).

Black males receive harsher treatment than any other group regarding discipline. The highest rate of suspensions and expulsions are seen in Black males, nationally (Noguera, 2003, p. 432; Lewis, Bonner, Butler, & Joubert, 2010, p. 8; Monroe, 2005, p. 46). One study done by Carla R. Monroe (2006) in a major Midwestern school district revealed African American students were overrepresented in office referrals, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions, wherefore students and teachers of different backgrounds lacked knowledge of each other's culture resulting in a discipline referral on the student's behalf (p. 102, 105). Monroe (2006) explained, not understanding African American culture weighs heavily on the discipline issue present in schools (p. 104). Wyatt (2009) cited, African-American males account for 34% of

suspensions because of severe disciplinary policies because of the zero-tolerance policy, African American males make up over 30% of suspensions (p. 463). The answer to the discipline gap rests in Monroe's explanation, "Since the education sector is comprised mostly of White professionals lacking knowledge of Black culture, points to the reason African American males are targeted repeatedly and disproportionately (Monroe, 2006, p. 105).

Her study concluded evidence is plentiful regarding African American boys receiving more disproportionate behavior sanctions within the K-12 public schools. She also concluded various theoretical frameworks on cultural constructs and naturalistic contexts exist to explain the recurrent problems in contemporary African American education. Failure to understand one's culture and an unclear point of reference for normative behavior can unjustifiably penalize students whose experiences differ from teacher- or institution-defined norms (p. 108). Monroe (2006) went on to explain how Irvine's framework of cultural synchronization was established, but many researchers have yet to analyze it relative to the discipline gap (p. 180). Lastly, Monroe (2006) concluded, that researchers should partner with teachers who work well with African American students and their families for ways to better serve African American students (p. 108).

Gregory et al. (2010) argued, more information between schools with racial diversity and racial homogeneity would be helpful in inquiring about the existence of present trends in school discipline. However, discourse on racial and ethnic disproportionality held true according to simplistic dichotomies that falsely pit individual student characteristics against systemic factors causing the overrepresentation in suspension or expulsion (p. 65). To combat the disproportionality of discipline among Black males and influence their attitudes and behaviors, Noguera (2003) stressed the importance of understanding their school experiences, which helped

form their identities from a structural and cultural viewpoint (p. 452). Schools play an essential role in fostering the identities of students. The possibility exists to reform schools to counteract the disproportionality of discipline among Black males.

McCray, Beachum, & Yawn (2015) advocated, because of educators' lack of familiarity with African American culture, Black males tend to be viewed negatively based on stereotypes, making it much easier to be suspended (p. 363). Social and cultural norms are disregarded when disciplining Black males. Reduction in the cultural gap experienced by students is a culturally responsive approach to avert school exclusion and increase the success of African American children and youth (Townsend, 2000).

Another finding McCray, Beachum, & Yawn (2015) found in their study that schools needed to examine data related to student equity to determine the inequities and develop a plan to resolve them (p. 364). They also argued, all school leaders should have a desire to cultivate a learning environment conducive to producing productive citizens in a global society where they will not be held back by educators who are not prepared to handle a diverse student population (p. 364).

Factors impeding academic success. Gordon et. al. (2009), revealed that, in addition to social barriers, academic barriers existed. Etic sources, or structural forces, depicted to African Americans that school is the place to learn and not gain value personally and Emic sources, or intra-cultural forces exhibited the link between school and future success (Gordon et al., 2009, p. 2). These unparalleled sources allow students to put the pieces together to determine the how and why of their situation.

The findings of the study conducted by Gordon et al. (2009) revealed, racial identity and academic identification correlated to GPA and standardized achievement test scores (p. 9).

Academic performance was linked strongly to racial identity statuses, relating academic identification with GPA and not standardized tests could be partly because of minority students' attitudes toward such tests along with the structural ramifications. More importantly, the participants in The Benjamin E. Mays Institute (BEMI) program showed significantly greater gains academically compared to their peers not mentored (Gordon et al., 2009).

Poor academic performance is a clear indication of "at-riskness" (McDonald, 2002). As academic failure increases, the greater the chance the student has of dropping out. Many mentoring programs exist to help students get back on track. Most children that are labeled at-risk have three common needs: a sense of direction, constant support, and a dependable mentor (Borman & D'Agostino, 1996). A positive role model could help provide a clear direction and support for at-risk youth.

Support from caring adults is instrumental in the development of at-risk youth and their academics. Such students are exposed to risk and environmental factors, which impede their academic success. Woolley & Bowen (2007) found that African American students' school experience is far less engaging than their counterparts solely due to lack of support from home resulting from societal stereotypes (p. 99). When compared to Whites in the sample, they tended to have more balance between risks and protection. Considering influences within the community may offer insight to the lower levels of school engagement reported by minority youth (Woolley & Bowen, 2007). Minority youth tend to have little to no support affecting them more than White youth. Research showed lack of support coupled with environmental risk and protective factors may give insight for the significant proportion of the racial/ethnic differences in school outcomes; however, a stronger presence of supportive adults in the lives of African American students would be linked with a reduction in educational gaps (p. 99). Woolley &

Bowen's (2007) results indicated implementing interventions to decrease certain factors while increasing reciprocity in the lives of at-risk youth improves school outcomes for such students and, altogether, may be the answer to reducing academic achievement gaps our nation faces (p. 100). Mentors' positive energy aid in manifesting positive outcomes of mentees. Karcher, Davidson, Rhodes, & Herrera (2010) stressed, "adults who hold a view of youth that emphasizes their strengths make a more profound encounter in their lives" (p. 224). An interesting finding to affect student achievement found nutrition to be a factor specific to the achievement gap among African American males. The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation did a study to see the effects of nutrition on student achievement or lack thereof. Results of the study pointed to poor diets in African Americans was linked to low academic achievement (White, 2009). Nutrition is important to achieve a healthy lifestyle. The composition of all foods helps with increased stamina to endure the course. Students who are poverty-stricken often lack in healthy nutrition habits due to lack of resources. The study posited certain foods to be advantageous for enhanced brainpower and to lessen specific stressors (p. 3).

Thompson & Kelly-Vance (2001) discussed, in *The Impact of Mentoring on Academic Achievement of At-risk Youth*, how having a mentor positively impacted academic achievement of at-risk (p. 238). The study was conducted using 12 at-risk boys participating in the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program and 13 at-risk youth not participating. Findings showed that the boys receiving mentoring outperformed those not receiving mentoring. An increase in academic achievement took place on the account of the boys participating rather than always being prompted by their mentors (p. 238). Academic achievement in this study was measured by performance on an achievement test.

In another Big Brothers Big Sisters study of a school-based mentoring program, youth were randomly assigned to the treatment or control group for 1 ½ years. This study found that youth made small academic gains but had a better outlook of their own abilities academically, while having a caring adult in their lives. The evaluation supported academic impacts found in a recent literature review in addition to other studies suggesting SBM is beneficial in academic areas for youth (Herrera et al., 2011).

Mentoring Initiatives. Increased academic performance is the common goal in mentoring programs serving middle grades students (Biggs, Musewe, & Harvey, 2014). The study results conducted by Biggs, Musewe, & Harvey (2014) revealed, positive academic effects on middle grade Black students who had a mentor, specifically, an increase in GPA in three core subjects than those not mentored in the comparison group. Lastly, the amount of time spent between mentor and mentee had a positive impact on academic achievement. DuBois and colleagues (2001) in Biggs et al. (2014) stated, the more under-privileged the students are, the greater chances of positive results through mentoring efforts will happen (p. 72-73).

A study of a mentoring program entitled LISTEN (Linking Individual Student To Educational Needs), found a positive correlation between mentoring and at-risk middle school student's GPA, discipline referrals, and attendance records (Johnson & Lampley, 2010). Data compared pre-intervention and post-intervention results of 54 participants. Significant gains were evident pre- and post-intervention. The results of the study concluded, almost all students showed significant gains academically and through attendance, while almost all, with the exception of 5 students showed gains overall (Johnson & Lampley, 2010). Evidence from this study affirmed how a positive relationship can help students. Mentoring continues to prove that

quality relationships matter for at-risk students, giving insight into how they positively affect those students in multiple aspects of their lives (p. 68).

Gaps in the Research. A gap in research regarding disproportionality of discipline between African American and Caucasian males exist. According to Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera (2010), positive findings were reported in a national sample of elementary and middle schools that executed positive behavior supports for at least one year prior to the data being disaggregated according to race. After disaggregation, significant disproportionality showed in office referrals and administrative consequences for Black and Latino students. Research is limited in the existence of possible effective interventions that could potentially reduce the racial discipline gap; however, research is available regarding possible factors related to the gap, but various strategies may be needed including: bringing to teachers' and administrators' attention the possibility of bias when referrals are written; providing multiple consequences in response to unwanted behaviors prior to a referral where consequences have not been issued; providing more options other than exclusion; trying to understand and determine the culprit of the behavior; and finding ways to create a teachable moment when students misbehave to show them the importance of good behavior during the discipline process (Gregory et al., 2010, p. 65).

Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, & Boyd (2009) acknowledged, students who identify positively with academics yields academic success (p. 278). Defined, academic identification is "the extent to which academic pursuits and outcomes form the basis for global self-evaluation" (Gordon et al., 2009). It has been shown that African American students' school identification impacts their academic motivation, performance, and success (Gordon et al., 2009). Identification with academics is especially relevant to Black males given this group is more likely to be placed in lower competent groups away from their classmates, receive

disproportionate discipline, and tend to be held in lower regard academically by their teachers (Gordon et al., 2009).

Another gap in the research exists among quality mentoring relationships from the mentor's perspective. Rhodes, Schwartz, Willis, & Wu (2014), asserted, "studies have focused mainly on experiences through the eyes of the mentee, but little focus has been on ways to assess the mentoring relationship quality from the perspective of the mentor" (p. 2). Quality mentoring relationships are important to the success of the match. While it is vital to learn what youth say about mentoring, it is even more critical to assess and learn what the mentor's experience is.

Previous studies have shown how mentoring has made a difference in the lives of youth from their perspective; however, most of those studies failed to show the factors of mentoring that create mentoring quality and effective mentoring programs (Liao & Sanchez, 2016; Karcher, Nakkula, & Harris, 2005). The quality of successful relationship matches stems from closeness and frequent contact. Liao & Sanchez (2016) indicated, limited research is available regarding the nature and quality of mentoring relationships of youth mentees but is linked to positive outcomes (p. 2-3). Studying how quality mentoring relationships can positively affect students is necessary to understand what makes quality mentoring. Furthermore, research is needed on determining from the mentor's perspective those factors that matter in quality relationships to aid mentoring programs to in establishing and nurturing lasting relationships (Karcher, Nakkula, & Harris, 2005).

Summary

The literature review highlighted characteristics of African American at-risk males, and the impact of a caring adult has on a child through mentoring. The literature supports the need for this correlational study due to the shortage of research pertaining to the relationship

mentoring has on attendance, behavior, and academics of African American males. At-risk youth are faced with so many issues that oftentimes go unnoticed. The key to shifting the paradigm is early detection. The literature emphasizes the importance of intervening at the first sign of risk. The need for mentoring is much greater considering the obstacles at-risk youth are up against. Previous mentoring research shows improved relationships, increased performance, and fewer problems (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008). Caught in time, at-risk youth can become successful.

The evolution of mentoring has expanded greatly over the years, making a positive impact on youth. Due to various factors; personal, societal, economic, and academic, mentoring has yielded positive results through experimental studies and program evaluations. The most successful mentoring program, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, has transformed many youths who participated. Wyatt (2009) asserted, most of the researched programs follow a “prevention-focused, risk and resilience framework, with a configuration of program services that incorporate recommendations from best practices models (p. 46). Understanding and acknowledging the facets of mentoring is necessary to improve academic success, increase attendance and modify behavior of at-risk students. Further research is needed about mentoring African American males. This research study will benefit the existing body of research on quality relationships between caring adults and African American males and its correlation on attendance, behavior, and academics.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This study tested the three hypotheses that through participation in a mentoring program, with high quality mentoring relationships from the perspective of the mentor, students' attendance will increase, students' behavior referrals will decrease, and students' cumulative grade point average will increase. Data collected entailed mentors' responses from the survey/questionnaire and students' total absences, discipline referrals, if any, and report card grades prior to and after mentoring. Relationships in collected data for mentees was compared against match quality from the perspective of the mentor. Chapter Three will consist of the summary of the design, research questions, null hypotheses, participants and setting, instrumentation, procedures and data analysis.

Design

A quantitative, correlational design was used for this study. Gall, Gall, & Borg (2007) defined correlational research as, "a type of investigation that seeks to discover the direction and magnitude of the relationship among variables using correlational statistics" (p. 636). The correlational design included a group of homogeneous mentors. The group was examined to determine the relationship quality mentoring relationships has on three variables, attendance and behavior and cumulative grade point average. The criterion variable was quality mentoring relationships, and the predictor variables were attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average. Mentoring is defined as the pairing of a youth to a non-parental adult figure who can serve as a role model and provide support for youth (Annastasia, Skinner, & Mundhenk, 2012). The quality of the mentoring relationship is defined as the satisfaction of the relationship between the mentor and mentee (Fair, Hopkins, & Decker, 2012). Regular attendance is defined

as five or fewer school days missed per year (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). Behavior is defined as something that a person does that can be observed, measured, and repeated (Bicard & Bicard, 2012). Cumulative point average is defined as an indicator of school performance and achievement (Hallfors, et al., 2002). This research design is most appropriate because it sought to find a relationship between the criterion variable, quality mentoring relationships and predictor variables attendance, behavior and cumulative grade point average. Researchers sometimes prefer to use a correlational design for two reasons: to explore casual relationships between variables and to predict scores on one variable from research participants' scores on other variables (Gall et al., 2007, p. 337). This research design is also most appropriate because the researcher is able identify the causes and effects of important educational phenomena (Gall et al., 2007, p. 337).

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and attendance among African American males?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and behavior among African American males?

RQ3: Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and cumulative grade point average among African American males?

Null Hypotheses

H₀1: There will be no statistically significant correlation between the quality of mentoring relationships and attendance among African American males.

H₀2: There will be no statistically significant correlation between the quality of mentoring relationships and behavior among African American males.

H₀₃: There is will be no statistically significant correlation between the quality of mentoring relationships and cumulative grade point average among African American males.

Participants and Setting

Participants

For this research study, local school-based mentoring (SBM) programs' mentors will be used for participants. The sample of 46 participants, was used for a medium effect size with statistical power of .7 at the .05 alpha level (Gall et al., 2007, p.145). Prior permission from the school district and mentor was given for the researcher to complete the study through the school-based mentoring (SBM) programs, giving me access to this population of mentors. The sample was selected through mentors in the mentoring program that mentor an African American male between sixth and eighth grade. Upon approval from the school district and principal and mentors, the researcher sent an introductory email giving explicit details on the study and the survey/questionnaire to be completed. The researcher provided mentors information on the selection process of the study and how their participation can be beneficial. The data collected was discussed in an introductory email. The researcher also discussed any risks that may have been involved in the study as well as their rights to participate in the study. Lastly, the researcher provided consent forms to be signed by mentors and returned to the researcher. Participants were 18 or older. The 46 participants consisted of mentors of African American males in grades six through eight. A total of 100% of the participants were mentors of African American males. The sample was inclusive of all mentors who mentor an African American male in grades six through eight. The sample consisted of 46 participants. A breakdown of participants' race, age, how long each mentor has served as a mentor (experience), and length of match (how long the mentor-mentee match had been formed) are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1

Mentor Descriptive Statistics

	Frequency	Percentage
Race		
Black or African American	25	54.3
Caucasian	18	39.1
Other or Not Reported	3	6.5
Age		
18-25	3	6.5
36-35	19	41.3
36-40	5	10.9
41-49	17	37.0
50+	2	4.3
Experience		
<1 year	24	52.2
1-2 years	2	4.3
3-4 years	3	6.5
5+ years	17	37.0
Length of Match		
< 1 month	16	34.8
3-6 months	16	34.8
6-9 months	8	17.4
1 year	2	4.3
>1 year	4	8.7

N=46

*Note: Mean = 258.33, SD = 24.6. The Mean and SD noted are the totals of each mentor descriptor above.

Setting

This study was conducted through school-based mentoring (SBM) programs in the upstate of South Carolina. The mentoring programs offered community-based mentoring (CBM) and school-based mentoring (SBM). Mentors in the community-based mentoring (CBM) usually spent time with their mentee within the community at least one hour or more in a week. Mentors in the school-based mentoring program typically spent lunch time with their mentee in a

designated area within the school setting. The mentoring programs used in this study served students in middle school weekly. Each program catered to specific needs of the mentee as determined by teachers, administrators, and parents. Each mentor had to take and pass a criminal background check prior to receiving a mentee. Mentors met with their mentees as often as they could. Meetings took place during and/or after the school day. The variables of the study were quality mentoring relationships (criterion) and attendance, behavior and cumulative grade point average (predictor). Each participant in the study was a mentor in a school-based mentoring (SBM) program.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this research study was the Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ) measuring match relationship quality (MRQ). This instrument is the most all-inclusive tool measuring the quality of mentoring relationships with validity evidence available. The survey is intended for adult mentors 18 and older, and usually takes 10-15 minutes to administer. This instrument has shown strong correlations between the two measures, internal and external match relationship quality (Harris & Nakkula, 2004; Harris & Nakkula, 2010). Free permission to use the surveys was granted after completing an online survey request form (See Appendix B). Surveys and supporting documents will be available for use for one year to the researcher using them for not-for-profit work for matches less than 250. Once completed, free access was provided for the Youth Mentoring Survey (YMS) and the Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ) along with instruction on administering the surveys and scoring.

The MCQ measured relational and instrumental (growth-focused) MRQ, including positive and negative perspectives on internal MRQ between a mentoring duo, structure and external MRQ. The first section (22 items) measured facets of internal MRQ, such as relational

satisfaction, instrumental satisfaction, and availability to support. The second section (20 items) assessed purpose, showing to what extent mentors value various factors. The third section (27 questions) measured additional perspective on internal MRQ and aspects of external MRQ. Frequency, duration, and location of meeting are measured by three questions (Harris & Nakkula, 2004).

Mentors read and answered questions in three sections indicating their response on a six-point Likert-style scale (internal items). All scores were interpreted to a 0-100 scale, with higher scores reflecting more positive ratings. Only when respondents answer at least 67% of the questions will scores be reported on subscales and broadscales (Harris & Nakkula, 2004; Harris & Nakkula, 2004). Outcomes such as academic functioning, length of match, and psychosocial development have all been predicted using the MCQ. Evidence has been published of the strong validity of the MCQ (Nakkula & Harris, 2005). The subscales of the MCQ reported reliability alphas ranging from .61 (Risk-Related Compatibility) to .92 (Academic Support-Seeking; the subscales reported broadscales all range between .81 (Relating Focus broadscale) and .95 (Overall Internal MCQ) (Harris & Nakkula, 1999). Factor analyses of the MCQ subscales have yielded strong reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha). The elements of Internal MRQ measured by the MCQ (with reliability alphas) include: Compatibility (.74), how much mentors feel they are well-matched with their mentees; Handles Mentee's Issues (.61), how much mentors feel prepared to handle mentees' issues; Closeness (.82), how much mentors feel close with mentees; Not Distant (.78), how much mentors feel mentees do not push them away; Satisfaction (.85), mentors' sense of fulfillment in the relationship; Nonacademic Support Seeking (.86), how much mentors feel mentees seek personal support; and Academic Support Seeking (.92), how much mentors feel mentees seek academic support (Nakkula & Harris, 2005).

The elements of Structure measured by the MCQ include: Fun (.77), how much mentors value hanging out and having a good time with their mentees; Sharing (.68), how much mentors value activities designed to forge a bond with their mentees; Character Development (.78), how much mentors value activities focused on mentees' maturation and psychosocial development; Future Outlook (.76), how much mentors value activities related to mentees' planning and preparing for their futures; and Academics (.79), how much mentors value school-related and mentally stimulating activities (Nakkula & Harris, 2005).

The elements of External MRQ measured by the MCQ include: Programmatic Support (.79), how much mentors feel supported by the program; Parental Support (.54), how positively mentors feel mentees' parents influence the match; and Interference (.65), how much mentors feel logistical and personal factors interfere with meetings (Nakkula & Harris, 2005).

Procedures

The procedures for this study followed the necessary protocol for approval. First, an IRB application was submitted. After IRB approval and research site approval, data collection took place.

To elicit participants for this quantitative study, the researcher sought permission from mentors and the mentoring program staff. To gain permission, the researcher consulted with the administrators overseeing the mentoring programs to gain access to the mentors. The administrators of the mentoring program got prior permission from the mentors to provide me their email addresses. The researcher may also send all information to the administrator over the mentoring program and ask them to send it out on his behalf. The researcher sent each mentor an introductory email providing information on the study and how their participation would be helpful in the study along with instructions on how to complete the survey (see Appendix D). A

letter of consent was also sent electronically for participants to sign and return to the researcher electronically through a Google form (see Appendix E). The researcher administered the Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ) through an online Google doc survey for a two-week period. The researcher analyzed data using SPSS software to determine acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses. The researcher collected all student record data from the participating school district. All data was be anonymous. The researcher denoted data using an alphanumeric code. Once sorted, the researcher recorded the information in an Excel spreadsheet and then began data analysis. Knowing the roadblocks ahead of time saved the researcher time and provide helpful information on how to better conduct the study going forward. All participants followed the same criteria and contributed to the outcome of the findings. The data was quantified by determining the scales of measurement for each variable.

Data Analysis

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used in this quantitative study. This test assessed the degree that quantitative variables were linearly related in a sample. Each individual or case must have scores on two quantitative variables. The significance test for r evaluates whether there is a linear relationship between the two variables in the population (Green & Salkind, 2011, p. 257). This was the necessary test for this study because it is the commonly used bivariate correlational technique since most educational measures yield continuous scores and r has a small standard error (Gall et. Al, 2011, p. 347). First, to check for outliers, a box and whiskers plot was used for each group. There were six assumptions underlying the significance test. The first assumption was level of measurement followed by independent observations. To determine whether the assumption of level of measurement was met, the variables had to be interval or ratio. An explanation that the observations between each

variable was independent of each other was provided. Next, normality will be tested with a histogram and Kolmogorov Smirnov test. Then, an assumption of bivariate outliers will be done using a scatterplot between each predictor variable (x) and criterion variable (y) to look for extreme bivariate outliers. To test for linearity, a scatterplot will be used to ensure a straight line. Lastly, assumption of bivariate normal distribution will be conducted using a scatterplot between each predictor and criterion variable to look for the cigar shape. These assumptions will be tested before conducting the Person Product moment correlation. The significance test for a Pearson correlation coefficient is not robust to violations of the independence assumption. If this assumption is violated, the correlation significance test should not be computed (Green & Salkind, 2011, p. 258). The effect size was determined using SPSS, where the index ranges from -1 to +1. This coefficient indicates the degree that low and high scores on one variable tend to go with low and high scores on another variable. A score on a variable is a low score to the extent that it falls below (or above) the means score on that variable (Green & Salkind, 2011, p. 258). A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was conducted to evaluate whether the mean scores on the Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ) are significantly different based on student's participation in the mentoring program and its relationship to attendance and behavior and overall grade point average. A minimum sample size of 46 participants was used for a medium effect size with statistical power of .7 at the .05 alpha level (Gall et al., 2007, p.145).

Summary

The purpose of this research study was to determine if a relationship existed between quality mentoring relationships and attendance, behavior, and academic achievement in African American males. The questions driving this study were: 1) Is there a relationship between the

quality of mentoring relationships and attendance among African American males?, 2) Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and behavior among African American males?, and 3) Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and cumulative grade point average among African American males? This study used instrumentation results to collect data from the participants. A correlational methodology was used among participants. Permission was sought from mentors and the mentoring program. For this study, quality mentoring relationships was the independent, or criterion variable and attendance, behavior, and academic achievement were the dependent, or predictor variables. The Mentoring Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ) provided insight on the mentor's perception of their match. Data analysis was analyzed using a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

Research was conducted on mentors of African American males participating in a mentoring program. Participants were selected from mentors mentoring an African American male student through a school-based mentoring (SBM) program. Participants were from various backgrounds, educational levels, socioeconomic class, etc. Many of the participants involved may or may not have had a mentee at some point. Data collection consisted of the Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ). Once all data was collected, the researcher performed data analysis on all variables. A box and whisker plot was done for each variable to determine outliers of each group. A significance test was done to determine the linearity of the study's variables. Also, six assumptions were conducted for correlations.

Each participant provided the researcher with an electronically signed consent form to participate in the study. All records were kept confidential in a secure location until after the

researcher's study has been successfully defended. Participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any given point.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if a measurable relationship existed between the quality of mentoring relationships and attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average in African American male students. This quantitative study sought to determine if a relationship existed between a quality mentoring relationship (criterion variable) and the predictor variables of attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average of African American male students. This quantitative study involved male teacher mentors from two middle schools in the Upstate of South Carolina. Chapter Four details the research study findings of the data collected with a review of the results pertaining to the research questions discussed in this study.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and attendance among African American males?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and behavior among African American males?

RQ3: Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and cumulative grade point average among African American males?

Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for this study were:

H₀1: There will be no statistically significant correlation between the quality of mentoring relationships and attendance among African American males.

H₀₂: There will be no statistically significant correlation between the quality of mentoring relationships and behavior among African American males.

H₀₃: There is will be no statistically significant correlation between the quality of mentoring relationships and cumulative grade point average among African American males.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 below shows the descriptive statistics for the variables in the study. The mentor score is the score received on the Match Characteristics Questionnaire and mentee data collected during the 2018-2019 academic year for those mentees of all participants in this study. The survey was comprised of 69 questions in three different sections that were all answered using a Likert Scale of one to six measuring various aspects of the mentor-mentee match. In the first section, one was “Never,” two was “Rarely,” three was “Sometimes,” four was “Pretty Often,” five was “Very Often,” and six was “Always.” The second section of the survey used one for “Not Important,” two for “A Little Important,” three for “Pretty Important,” four for “Very Important,” five for “Extremely Important,” and six for “Most Important.” The last section of the survey used one for “Completely Agree,” two for “Mostly Disagree,” three for “Tend to Disagree,” four for “Tend to Agree,” five for “Mostly Agree,” and six for “Completely Agree.”

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
Mentoring Score	46	258.33	24.60	257.00	218	319
Total Absences	46	6.01	4.43	5.00	0	13.5
Discipline	46	2.33	2.94	1.50	0	13
GPA	46	2.94	0.72	3.0	1.5	4.56

N = 46

Results

Data Screening

Data analysis was conducted on the 47 mentors who completed the survey. Of those 47, one had to be withdrawn because there was no student data for their mentee, making the total number of surveys completed 46.

Null Hypothesis One

Null Hypothesis One stated that there will be no statistically significant relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and attendance among African American males. The planned test of this hypothesis was a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient on the Mentoring scores and the students' absences.

Assumption tests. There were six assumptions underlying the significance test: 1) level of measurement, 2) independence, 3) normality, 4) bivariate outliers, 5) linearity, and 6) bivariate normal distribution (Laerd Statistics, 2018). The significance test for a Pearson correlation coefficient is not robust to violations of the independence assumption (Green & Salkind, 2011). The first assumption was satisfied because both the Mentoring variable and the Absences variable were measured on interval-level scales. The normality and outliers for both variables were investigated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, histograms, scatterplots, and boxplots. Linearity was tested using a scatterplot with a straight line and bivariate normal distribution was tested using a scatterplot to look for a cigar shape between each criterion and predictor variable.

Mentoring scores. The K-S test for the Mentoring scores had a probability of $p = .200$. According to Field (2009), when the K-S test is nonsignificant it usually implies a normal distribution. Thus, the nonsignificant probability supports the assumption of normality for the

Mentoring scores. Figure 1 below shows the histogram of the Mentoring score distribution. The distribution appears reasonably normal.

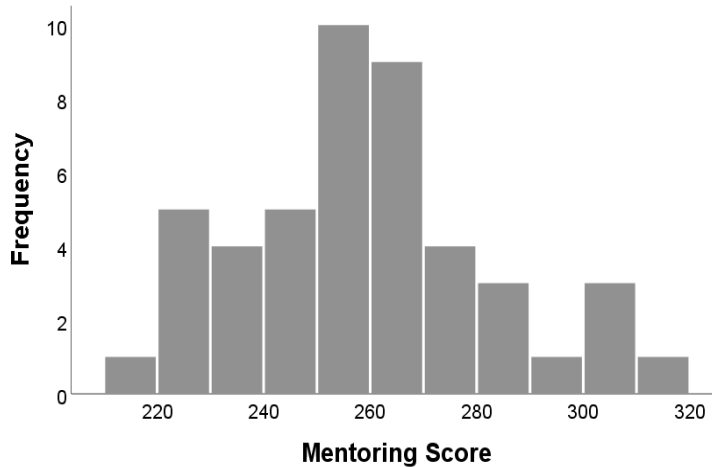


Figure 1. Histogram showing distribution of Mentoring scores ($N = 46$) for correlations with Absences and Discipline scores.

Figure 2 below shows the boxplot for the Mentoring scores, which highlights case 25 as an outlier. The outlier was kept in the data and a Spearman's rho correlation was used since it is less sensitive to outliers (Laerd Statistics, 2018).

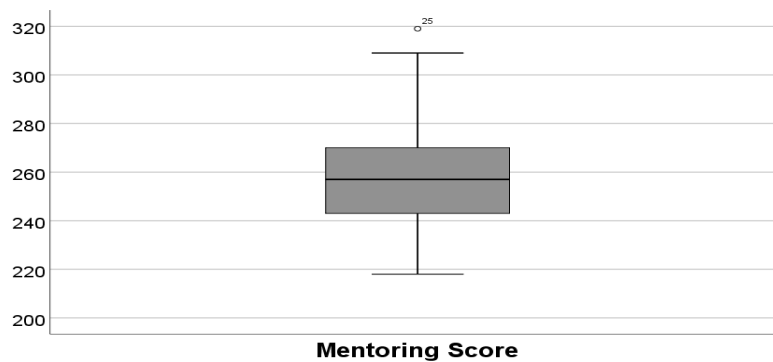


Figure 2. Boxplot showing distribution of Mentoring scores ($N = 46$) for correlations with Absences and Discipline scores.

Absences. The K-S test for the Absences had a probability of $p = 0.003$. The significant probability indicates that the Absences variable did not have a normal distribution (Field, 2009).

Figure 3 below shows the histogram of the Absences variable distribution. The distribution appears to be bimodal but does not appear to have outliers. Other assumptions must be satisfied before the Pearson correlation can be used: the variables must be linear, no significant outliers, and both variables must show bivariate normality (Laerd Statistics, 2018). A scatterplot was conducted to assess the assumption of linearity and bivariate normal distribution. The scatterplot affirmed linearity, having a strong, negative linear relationship and bivariate normal distribution indicating those assumptions were met. However, one bivariate outlier was present. Since an outlier was present, a Spearman's rho correlation was used to justify using a Pearson's correlation coefficient. Figure 4 below shows the scatterplot with the best fit line of the Absences variable distribution.

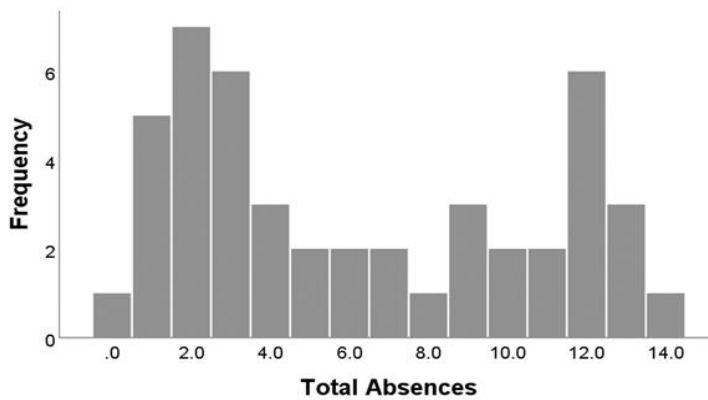


Figure 3. Histogram showing distribution of Absences.

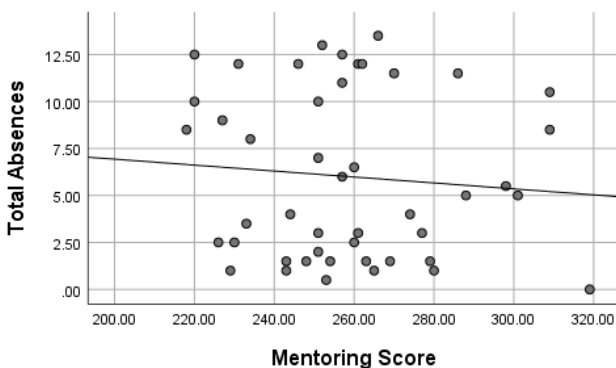


Figure 4. Scatterplot with Best Fit Line of Total Absences by Mentor Score.

Figure 5 below shows the boxplot for the Absences variable, which also did not indicate any outliers.

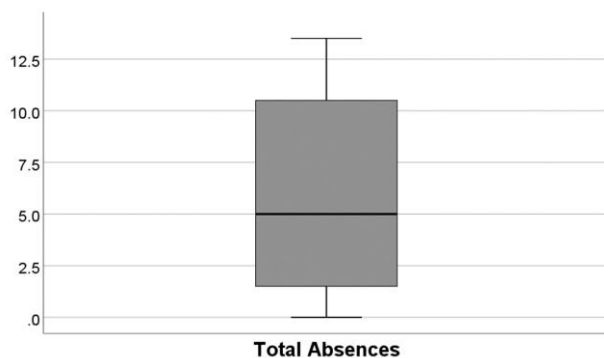


Figure 5. Boxplot showing distribution of Absences.

Results. Because the Absences variable did not have a normal distribution, a Pearson correlation was not appropriate for this data. A Spearman rho correlation was used instead since the data violated parametric assumptions such as nonnormal distribution of data (Field, 2009). The result indicated a nonsignificant correlation as shown below in Table 3: $r(44) = -0.066$, $p(2\text{-tailed}) = 0.663$. Null Hypothesis One was not retained; the evidence did not support the existence of a relationship between Mentoring scores and the students' attendance.

Table 3

Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and Attendance

			Mentoring Score	Total Absences
Spearman's rho	Mentoring Score	Correlation	1.000	-0.066
		Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.663
	N	46	46	
	Total Absences	Correlation	-0.066	1.000
Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)		0.663	.	
N		46	46	

Null Hypothesis Two

Null Hypothesis Two stated that there will be no statistically significant relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and behavior among African American males. The planned test of this hypothesis was a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient computed on the Mentoring scores and the students' Discipline scores.

Assumption tests. There were six assumptions underlying the significance test: 1) level of measurement, 2) independence, 3) normality, 4) bivariate outliers, 5) linearity, and 6) bivariate normal distribution (Laerd Statistics, 2018). The first assumption was satisfied because both the Mentoring variable and the Discipline variable were measured on interval-level scales. The normality and outliers for both variables were investigated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, histograms, scatterplots, and boxplots. Linearity was tested using a scatterplot with a straight line and bivariate normal distribution was tested using a scatterplot to look for a cigar shape between each criterion and predictor variable.

Discipline. The K-S test for the Discipline variable had a probability of $p < 0.001$. The significant probability indicates that the Discipline variable was not normally distributed. Figure 6 below shows the histogram of the Discipline score distribution. Other assumptions must be satisfied before the Pearson correlation can be used: the variables must be linear, no significant outliers, and both variables must show bivariate normality (Laerd Statistics, 2018). A scatterplot was conducted to assess the assumption of linearity and bivariate normal distribution. The scatterplot affirmed linearity, having a strong, negative linear relationship and bivariate normal distribution indicating those assumptions were met. However, several bivariate outliers were present. Since outliers were present, a Spearman's rho correlation was used to justify using a

Pearson's correlation coefficient. Figure 7 below shows the scatterplot with the best fit line of the Discipline variable distribution.

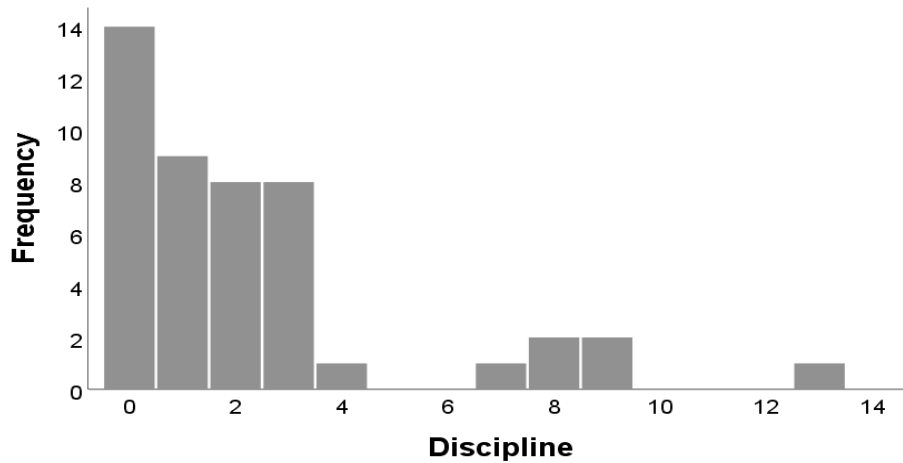


Figure 6. Histogram showing distribution of Discipline scores.

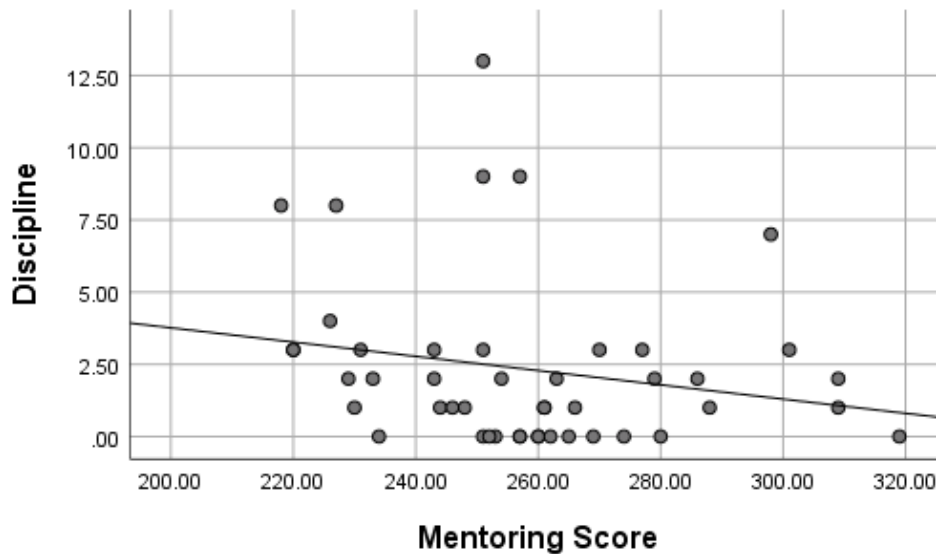


Figure 7. Scatterplot with Best Fit Line of Discipline by Mentor Score.

The distribution appears to have a strong positive skew and at least one outlier. The outliers were kept in the data and a Spearman's rho correlation was used since it is less sensitive to outliers (Laerd Statistics, 2018). Figure 8 below shows the boxplot for the Discipline scores, which indicates several outliers.

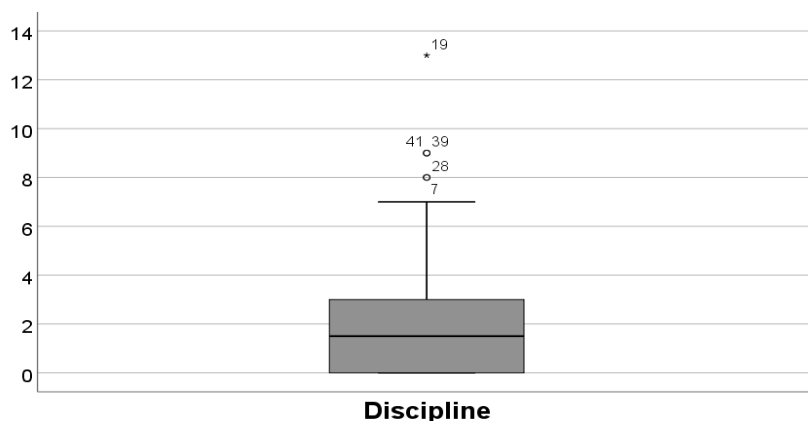


Figure 8. Boxplot showing distribution of Discipline scores.

Results. Because the Discipline variable did not have a normal distribution, a Pearson correlation was not appropriate for this data. A Spearman rho correlation was used instead since the data violated parametric assumptions such as nonnormal distribution of data (Field, 2009). The Spearman correlation is unaffected by lack of normality and the presence of outliers. The result indicated a significant correlation as shown below in Table 4: $r(44) = -0.293$, $p(2\text{-tailed}) = 0.048$. Consequently, Null Hypothesis Two was rejected. The correlation value indicates that higher Mentoring scores are associated with lower Discipline scores.

Table 4

Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and Discipline

			Mentor	
			Score	Discipline
Spearman's rho	Mentor Score	Correlation	1.000	-0.293*
		Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.048	
	N	46	46	
Discipline	Discipline	Correlation	-0.293*	1.000
		Coefficient		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.048	.	
	N	46	46	

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Null Hypothesis Three

Null Hypothesis Three stated that there will be no statistically significant relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and GPA among African American males. The planned test of this hypothesis was a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

Assumption tests. There were six assumptions underlying the significance test: 1) level of measurement, 2) independence, 3) normality, 4) bivariate outliers, 5) linearity, and 6) bivariate normal distribution (Laerd Statistics, 2018). The first assumption was satisfied because both the Mentoring variable and the Discipline variable were measured on interval-level scales. The normality and outliers for both variables were investigated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test, histograms, scatterplots, and boxplots. Linearity was tested using a scatterplot with a straight line and bivariate normal distribution was tested using a scatterplot to look for a cigar shape between each criterion and predictor variable.

Mentoring scores. The Mentoring variable was found to have a normal distribution. The normality analysis for the Mentoring scores was repeated from Hypothesis One. The K-S test for the Mentoring scores had a probability of $p = 0.200$. The nonsignificant probability supports the assumption of normality for the Mentoring scores (Field, 2009). Figure 9 below shows the histogram of the Mentoring score distribution. The distribution of Mentoring scores appears reasonably normal and did not appear to have outliers.

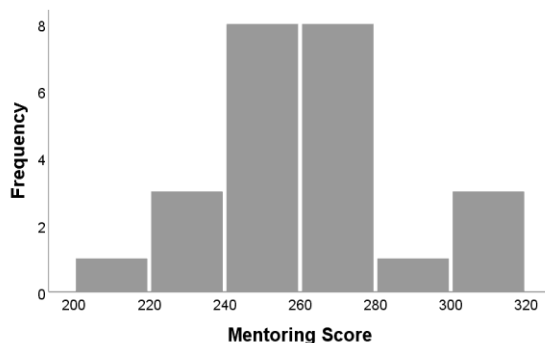


Figure 9. Histogram showing distribution of Mentoring scores (N = 46) used in correlation with GPA.

Figure 10 below shows the boxplot for the Mentoring scores, which indicated an outlier. The outlier was kept in the data and a Spearman's rho correlation was used since it is less sensitive to outliers (Laerd Statistics, 2018).

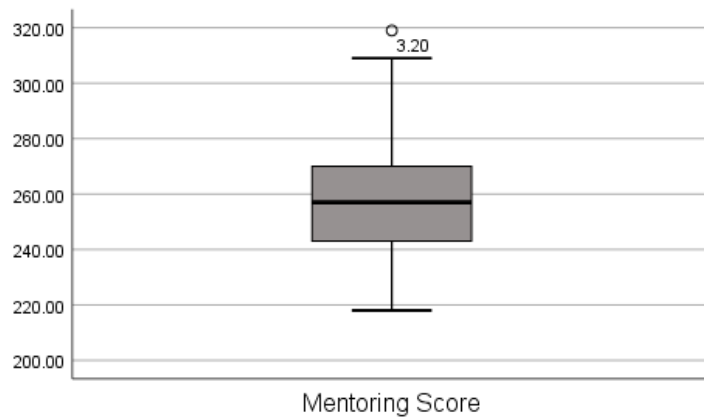


Figure 10. Boxplot showing distribution of Mentor scores (N = 46) for correlation with GPA.

GPA. The K-S test for GPA also had a probability of $p = 0.200$. The nonsignificant probability supports the assumption of normality for GPA. Figure 11 below shows the histogram of the GPA distribution.

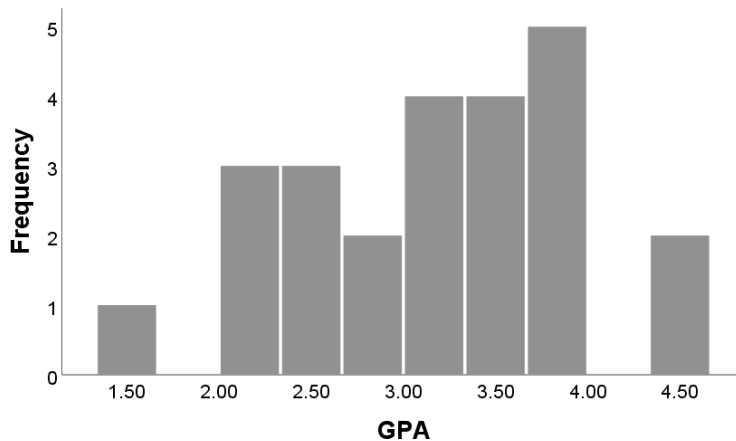


Figure 11. Histogram showing distribution of GPAs.

The distribution of GPA scores appears to have a slight negative skew and did not appear to have outliers. Other assumptions must be satisfied before the Pearson correlation can be used: the variables must be linear, no significant outliers, and both variables must show bivariate normality (Laerd Statistics, 2018). A scatterplot was conducted to assess the assumption of linearity and bivariate normal distribution. The scatterplot affirmed linearity, having a weak, negative linear relationship and bivariate normal distribution indicating those assumptions were met. Additionally, no bivariate outliers were present. Figure 12 below shows a scatterplot with a Best Fit line of the GPA variable distribution. Figure 13 below shows the boxplot for GPA, which also did not indicate any outliers.

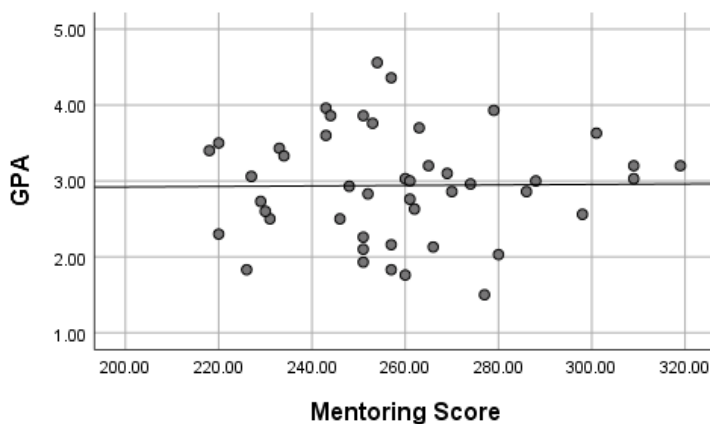


Figure 12. Scatterplot with Best Fit Line of GPA by Mentor Score.

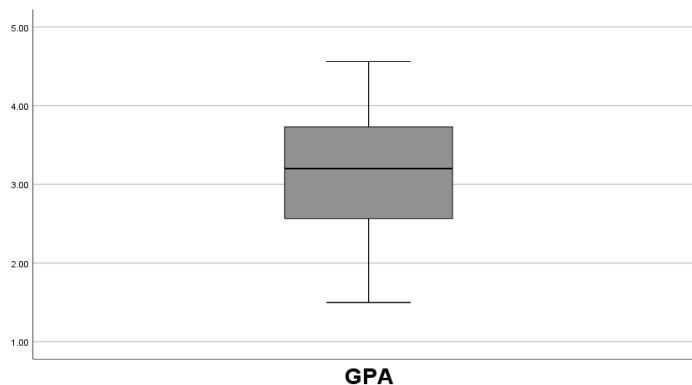


Figure 13. Boxplot showing distribution of GPAs.

Results. Because the GPA variable did not meet the assumption of no outliers, a Pearson correlation was not appropriate. A Spearman's rho was used instead since the data violated parametric assumptions such as significant outliers of data (Field, 2009). The correlation was not significant as shown below in Table 5: $r(44) = -0.008$, $p(2\text{-tailed}) = 0.956$. Null Hypothesis Three was retained; the evidence did not support the existence of a relationship between Mentoring scores and the students' GPAs.

Table 5

Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and GPA

		Mentoring		
		Score	GPA	
Spearman's rho	Mentoring Score	Correlation	1.000	
		Coefficient	-0.008	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	. 0.956	
	GPA	N	46	46
		Correlation	-0.008	1.000
		Coefficient		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.956 .	
		N	46 46	

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The contents of this chapter will include a discussion, implications, limitations, and recommendations for further research. The conclusions discussed will help to add to the existing body of literature regarding mentoring, specifically with African American males. The conclusions were guided by the three research questions at the forefront of this study.

Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if a measurable relationship existed between the quality of mentoring relationships and attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average in African American male students. With African American males struggling academically compared to their counterparts, this study strived to determine, if any, the relationship quality mentoring relationships had on attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average among African American males from the mentors' perspective.

Research Question 1

Research Question One stated, "Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and attendance among African American males?" The null hypothesis of this study indicated there would be no statistically significant correlation between the quality of mentoring relationships and attendance among African American males. The results of the study denoted no significant relationship between quality mentoring relationships and attendance in African American males. In a similar study by Royse (1998), it concluded there was not enough evidence to prove an impact existed by having a mentor. This study rendered similar results to the current study. As in both studies, increased attendance may have occurred, but not evident through the means in which it was measured. The researcher determined the culprit may be

attributed to the length of the match, time spent during each session, no data available regarding the quality of the match, difficulty recruiting mentors, and mentors not able to change their mentees circumstances should be considered to provide insight on the findings. Converse (2009) conducted a study to investigate the impact of a school-based mentoring program on at-risk students' office referrals, unexcused absences and school attitude. Results of the study revealed there was an absence of significance for mentored and non-mentored students' attendance which also resembled findings from several other studies. One of the main reasons why there was not enough information to determine a correlation between mentoring and attendance was there was a small sample. The researcher suggested a larger sample size is needed for generalized results. Additionally, expanding the study to more than one school, different grade levels, and age groups could yield different results. The significance of this study was to gain insight on how having a mentor would increase attendance among at-risk students. It has been noted that having a mentor does have a positive impact on students in many aspects of their lives. Another study by Johnson & Lampley (2010) was conducted to examine the relationship of a mentoring program with at-risk students' attendance. The researchers of this study sought to seek if a relationship existed between mentoring and African American males' attendance. Their findings revealed participants' attendance increased significantly by participating in the LISTEN Mentoring program which contrasted the results of this study. The difference in results was primarily due to the organization and structure of the program. Having a one-to-one relationship allowed for better results. Additionally, the study lasted over a two-year period. Although hypothesized that attendance would increase being matched with a mentor, results from this study insinuated a neutral position. There was not enough evidence to suggest there was a

correlation between quality mentoring relationships and attendance among African American males.

Research Question 2

Research Question Two stated, “Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and behavior among African American males?” The null hypothesis of this study indicated there would be no statistically significant correlation between the quality of mentoring relationships and behavior among African American males. The results of the study denoted no significant relationship between quality mentoring relationships and behavior in African American males. A study conducted by Monroe (2006) sought to detect the disparity of the discipline gap as African American males were noted to receive more discipline sanctions than their counterparts. This research was necessary to examine the root cause of Black boys receiving harsher disciplinary actions than their counterparts. The researcher concluded that the misunderstanding of the African American culture tended to weigh heavily when it comes to discipline and African American males. Additionally, this study coincided with the current research study because there was not a significant correlation between mentoring and behavior of African American males. Cultural constructs seem to be the reason for the overrepresentation of African American males receiving most of the discipline referrals. Converse (2009) conducted a study exploring at-risk students’ participation in a mentoring program and how it improved their behavior. These findings differed from the current research study results. The way the mentors were categorized, “viewed positively,” and “questioned-impact” could be the reason for the difference in results. Those labeled “viewed positively” yielded more positive results than those labeled “questioned-impact.” Additionally, the findings reported a decrease in office referrals compared to students who were not in the mentoring program. Johnson & Lampley (2010)

studied the relationship of a mentoring program with at-risk students' discipline referrals. The findings differed from the current study and concluded the mentees in the school-based district program showed significant improvement in discipline referrals. As forestated, the one-to-one relationship is key to success. Additionally, it was revealed by the researchers that having a mentor, a caring adult, seemed to positively impact the participants. While the null hypothesis was not rejected, not enough evidence was gained to suggest a correlation between quality mentoring relationship and behavior among African American males.

Research Question 3

Research Question Three stated, "Is there a relationship between the quality of mentoring relationships and cumulative grade point average among African American males?" The null hypothesis of this study indicated there would be no statistically significant correlation between the quality of mentoring relationships and cumulative grade point average among African American males. The results of the study denoted no significant relationship between quality mentoring relationships and cumulative grade point average in African American males. A study by Mac Iver, Sheldon, Naeger, & Clark (2016) looked at how a mentoring program could impact low-income and minority middle and high school students who show signs of dropping out on attendance, behavior, and passing classes. Additionally, the findings of their study were like the findings of the current research study showing mentoring had no impact on academic outcomes. This could be because such interventions provide little to no effect because of issues with implementation and the programs fail to address the pertinent variables impacting student outcomes. A research study conducted by Thompson & Kelly-Vance (2001) tested the impact of mentoring on the academic achievement of at-risk youth participating in Big Brothers Big Sisters. This study rendered differing results where the researchers reported males in the

treatment group (receiving mentoring) made significantly higher academic gains than those males in the control group. This could possibly be attributed to the consistent contact between mentor and mentee. The more contact made can aid in positive outcomes when other important variables are taken into consideration. Another study conducted by Wyatt (2009) concluded that African American males do not excel at the same levels as their White counterparts. The researcher focused on the causes of disproportionality and how to close the achievement gap. Additionally, the study revealed GPAs of program participants were higher than those non-participants. These findings were contrary to the current study's findings because Wyatt (2009) developed its program using the principles of the American School Counselors Association (ASCA) National Model and incorporated grade checks each quarter. Additionally, the results suggested having a school counselor meeting with participants regularly to review their postsecondary plans is helpful and lends itself to the positive results of the study. While the null hypothesis was not rejected, not enough evidence was gained to suggest a correlation between quality mentoring relationship and cumulative grade point average among African American males. Regardless of the results of this study, there is evidence that mentoring has a positive effect academically. Such evidence is seen in a study conducted by DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine (2011) which suggests that programs that seek to establish a meaningful relationship with the male mentees tend to have a more favorable academic outcome among the African American males participants.

Implications

Much information can be gathered from the results of this study. Although more generalizability was needed, the results still provided needed information. Having completed this study, it will now be one added to the existing body of literature on mentoring. It can be

implied that the need for matching mentors and mentees should be closely looked at in the future, given the inconsistencies of the survey results. While it is a fact that mentoring yields positive results, further research should be done. The findings of this study implied that a closer look should be given to the logistics of the mentoring program and how it is run and can better benefit all parties involved. The benefits of mentoring are plentiful. One study by Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch (2000) pointed out, "having a mentor can have a positive effect on mentees' attendance, behavior, and knowledge of school-related subjects" (p. 1669). Since there was no significant positive relationship found in the results of this study, much can be implied. The data showed there is much more work to be done in this area. Many researchers have shown how important and effective mentoring is. Shannon & Bylsma (2006) noted, "...schools need to make systematic changes. Restructuring and comprehensive school improvement are terms often used to denote the extent of change needed to create schools that are responsive to all students..." (p. 5).

One may gather from the findings that more focus should be placed on supports available for the mentee. The goal of any mentoring program is to ensure the success of the mentee, while fostering a positive relationship with the mentor. The bond between the match will be a tell-tell sign of whether the match will last. Also, there should be ongoing training for the mentor to become a better mentor for their mentee. Mentors should complete extensive training prior to becoming a mentor. This is a serious and life-changing task that should not be entered in to lightly. Next, a yearly evaluation of the program should be done to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program for improvement purposes. Lastly, the mentoring program should encourage mentors to create relationships with their mentee's parent(s). By doing so, it will provide support for the mentor and parent in aiding the mentee toward success. Since mentoring

is a “strategy for fostering positive relationships, improving learning, and potentially reducing dropouts,” one may agree that the abovementioned implications are necessary for the future (Shannon & Bylsma, 2006, p. 61). To see different results, different measures must be taken into consideration in the future.

Limitations

This study was limited to two schools in one school district located in the Upstate of South Carolina. Additional research could include all schools at all levels within the entire county that has a mentoring program. Also, the sample size was too small leaving no room to draw meaningful conclusions. The more mentors surveyed would have conceivably shown a different result. A limitation of this study was that teachers served as mentors. This could pose problems because the mentees know most of the teachers within their school. Depending on their interaction with them prior to or even during mentoring, the quality of the relationship may be limited. Also, the teacher’s background versus a mentor from the business sector’s background should be given a closer look. Since this study was limited to teacher mentors, it would be good to look at mentors from other areas within the community. Whereas teachers’ backgrounds usually encompass working with children and preparing them to do well, a mentor from the community could simply take into consideration fostering the well-being of the mentee. Another limitation was not all mentors were African American. There may be some underlying tones in this limitation, but it could also work out for the best interest of the mentee even though those mentors not of African American ethnicity cannot relate to their African American mentee. Additional research is needed from mentors of African American and Caucasian ethnicities to determine what works best when mentoring African American males. This study did not have an equal number of mentees per grade level. Further research could target all mentors with

mentees in one grade or an equal distribution among all grades. More research could be done using males of another ethnicity to determine if the results would be the same. Lastly, with one of the subscale measures of the Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ) detailing how much mentors are prepared to handle mentees' issues had a reliability of less than .7, it was considered a limitation.

Recommendation for Future Research

Further research is necessary, not only to add to the body of existing knowledge, but to increase the success rate of mentoring programs and its mentees. The following recommendations were discovered through the results of this study and will provide more information on mentoring in general, but more specific of African American males.

1. Future research may explore a study on matches that have lasted one year and longer and how much contact the match had over a period. This study would help to understand how important time is when it comes to mentoring. The length of a match is very important and is oftentimes overlooked. Characteristics of mentoring matches could include, mentor and mentee of the same race and gender, mentees at risk of dropping out of school, mentees who just need an extra push from someone because there is no support at home. Much could be gathered from a research study such as this.
2. Another recommendation for future research would be to develop a training for mentors with a Biblical worldview to include the matching process, and what successful mentoring looks like and how to implement an effective program.

3. It is recommended to conduct a qualitative study. By doing so, the researcher more than likely will yield more results and better able to see just how good of an intervention mentoring really is.
4. Further research could be done to see if the same results are yielded in a more established mentoring program. Programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, My Brother's Keeper, and Boys and Girls Club of America all conduct evaluations for improvement purposes. It would be highly recommended to conduct this same study within one of these programs.
5. A recommended study would be to examine the careers, age, community involvement, and church affiliation of each mentor. This information could show what kinds of people work best with children. The results could show how and where to strategically place mentors.

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APPENDIX A: IRB Approval**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 16, 2018

Cedric G. Miller

IRB Approval 3534.111618: Quality Relationships Matter: The Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and African American Males' Attendance, Behavior, and Cumulative Grade Point Average

Dear Cedric G. Miller,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

5. Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for nonresearch purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis). (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(4\)](#). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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APPENDIX B: Permission to Use Survey Instrument



April 11, 2018

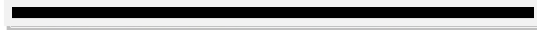
Dear Mr. Miller:

Thank you for your interest in the Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ). I am pleased to grant you permission to use it for your current research project. However, you may not publish or redistribute it.

Best Regards,



Owner, [Redacted]



APPENDIX C: Introductory Email/Survey Instructions

Dear Mentor Participants,

My name is Cedric Miller and I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. I am conducting a study on Quality Relationships Matter: The Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and African American Males' Attendance, Behavior, and Cumulative Grade Point Average. This study will help provide more insight from the mentor's perspective due to the limited studies available. At the end of this study, it will be determined the relationship quality mentoring has on African American male students' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average.

To ensure I get the necessary information, your help is needed. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to take a 10-15-minute online survey about quality mentoring relationships. Your participation in this brief survey will be greatly appreciated. By participating, your name will be placed in a drawing for a chance to win one of 4 \$25 gift cards.

Data will be collected from each mentor's responses to the questions on the online survey. Responses will be tallied, and data will be reviewed to determine the relationship quality mentoring relationships has on African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average.

The link below will allow you access to the survey. Please complete it within 2 weeks of receipt. For each statement in the survey, please say how often it is true for you by choosing a number from the scale **1= Never; 2= Rarely; 3= Sometimes; 4= Pretty Often; 5= Very Often; 6= Always**. If you do not think a question applies to you or if it does not make sense to you, please leave it blank. After the last question, please hit submit for your responses to be recorded. Once completed, you may exit the link.

Prior to completing to the online survey, the researcher must have your signed consent form. You may print it and sign it and return it via physical mail to Cedric G. Miller at [REDACTED] or you may print it, scan it, and attach it in an email to the researcher at [REDACTED]@liberty.edu.

Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to provide pertinent data for my research study. You will be notified if you are the winner of one of the \$25 gift cards.

Sincerely,

Cedric G. Miller

Survey Link:

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX D: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Quality Relationships Matter: The Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and African American Males' Attendance, Behavior, and Cumulative Grade Point Average

Cedric Gerard Miller

Liberty University

School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of quality relationships matter: the correlation between quality mentoring relationships and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average. This study will seek to find the relationship between a quality mentoring relationship of a caring adult with an African American male student and their attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average. You were selected as a possible participant because the researcher feels very strongly that your role as a mentor is very important to the attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average of African American male students. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Cedric Gerard Miller, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a relationship between quality mentoring relationships and students' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. The first task would be to email the instructions on how to complete the survey to participants along with how to send the researcher the consent form.
2. The second task would be to email the survey to participants once all consent forms have been received. Participants will have 2 weeks to complete the survey.
3. The third task will be to gather anonymous student data from the mentoring agency.
4. The fourth task will be to tabulate responses from the mentor's survey responses and anonymous student data. All information will be strictly confidential. The researcher will take about 2 weeks to complete this task.

Risks: The risks involved in this study "The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life."

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study. Participants will be added to a drawing for a chance to win one of four \$25 gift cards. Four names will be drawn for a chance to win.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your respective mentoring agency. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation prior to submitting your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Cedric Gerard Miller. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] and/or email [REDACTED]@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. [REDACTED], at [REDACTED]@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher[s], **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX E: Permissions to Conduct Research

July 25, 2018

Cedric G. Miller
Principal Investigator
Liberty University
1971 University Boulevard
Lynchburg, VA 24515

Dear Cedric:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled, Quality Relationships Matter: The Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and African American Males' Attendance, Behavior, and Cumulative Grade Point Average, we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study in [REDACTED] School District [REDACTED] for the purpose of determining if a relationship exists between quality mentoring relationships and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average.

We understand the data collected will be used to determine the relationship between quality mentoring and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average, if any. We also understand that participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating, and taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

We will provide you, the researcher, the requested data stripped of any identifying information and ask that you share a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED], Ed.D.

Assistant Superintendent [REDACTED]

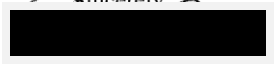


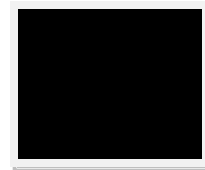
August 2, 2018

Dear Mr. Cedric G. Miller:

██████████ Middle School has agreed to participate in your research project, entitled, Quality Relationships Matter: The Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and African American Males' Attendance, Behavior and Cumulative Grade Point Average.

By participating, we agree to provide you, the researcher, with the requested data, stripped of any identifying information.

Sincerely,

Principal



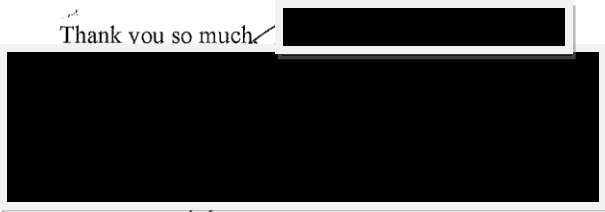


August 30, 2018

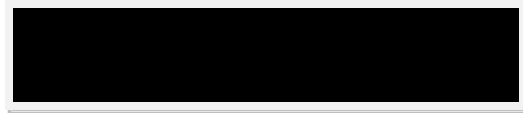
Dear Mr. Miller,

I am writing to give you permission for student grades at the beginning and end of the school year. We hope you are very successful with your Ph.D. this is quite an undertaking and we wish you the best of luck. I hope our information helps. Of course all personally identifiable information will be redacted from the record.

Thank you so much,



Principal





August 03, 2018

Cedric G. Miller
Principal Investigator
Liberty University
1971 University Boulevard
Lynchburg, VA 24515

Dear Cedric:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled, *Quality Relationships Matter: The Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and African American Males' Attendance, Behavior, and Cumulative Grade Point Average*, we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study using mentors from [REDACTED] for the purpose of determining if a relationship exists between quality mentoring relationships and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average.

We understand the data collected will be used to determine the relationship between quality mentoring and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average, if any. We also understand that participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating, and taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

We ask that you share a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Respectfully,



Founder, [REDACTED]

APPENDIX F: Permission Request Letters to Conduct Research

June 27, 2018

Dear Dr. [REDACTED]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The title of my research project is Quality Relationships Matter: The Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and African American Males' Attendance, Behavior, and Cumulative Grade Point Average and the purpose of my research is to determine if a relationship exists between quality mentoring relationships and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average.

I am writing to request your permission to utilize your district's mentoring list to recruit participants for my research. Additionally, I would like to request permission to use your district's data on African American male mentees in grades 5-8.

Participants (mentors) will be asked to access their email and click on the link provided to complete an online survey. The data will be used to determine the relationship between quality mentoring and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average, if any exist. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

There are no known risks to this study. Participants' identity will not be disclosed at any time during this study. I anticipate my findings will reveal positive results that can be shared to help improve mentoring in our community while bringing more general knowledge to the field of education.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Cedric G. Miller
Principal Investigator

July 26, 2018

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The title of my research project is Quality Relationships Matter: The Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and African American Males' Attendance, Behavior, and Cumulative Grade Point Average and the purpose of my research is to determine if a relationship exists between quality mentoring relationships and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average.

I am writing to request your permission to utilize your school's mentoring list to recruit participants for my research.

Participants (mentors) will be asked to access their email and click on the link provided to complete an online survey. The data will be used to determine the relationship between quality mentoring and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average, if any exist. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

There are no known risks to this study. Participants' identity will not be disclosed at any time during this study. I anticipate my findings will reveal positive results that can be shared to help improve mentoring in our community while bringing more general knowledge to the field of education.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Cedric G. Miller
Principal Investigator

August 15, 2018

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The title of my research project is Quality Relationships Matter: The Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and African American Males' Attendance, Behavior, and Cumulative Grade Point Average and the purpose of my research is to determine if a relationship exists between quality mentoring relationships and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average.

I am writing to request your permission to utilize your mentoring list to recruit participants for my research.

Participants (mentors) will be asked to access their email and click on the link provided to complete an online survey. The data will be used to determine the relationship between quality mentoring and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average, if any exist. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

There are no known risks to this study. Participants' identity will not be disclosed at any time during this study. I anticipate my findings will reveal positive results that can be shared to help improve mentoring in our community while bringing more general knowledge to the field of education.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Cedric G. Miller
Principal Investigator

July 10, 2018

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The title of my research project is Quality Relationships Matter: The Correlation Between Quality Mentoring Relationships and African American Males' Attendance, Behavior, and Cumulative Grade Point Average and the purpose of my research is to determine if a relationship exists between quality mentoring relationships and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average.

I am writing to request your permission to utilize your mentoring list to recruit participants for my research.

Participants (mentors) will be asked to access their email and click on the link provided to complete an online survey. The data will be used to determine the relationship between quality mentoring and African American males' attendance, behavior, and cumulative grade point average, if any exist. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

There are no known risks to this study. Participants' identity will not be disclosed at any time during this study. I anticipate my findings will reveal positive results that can be shared to help improve mentoring in our community while bringing more general knowledge to the field of education.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Cedric G. Miller
Principal Investigator