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Came from a Woman, Game from a Woman: The Enactment of Role Model and Mentor Identities by Black Women Leading Single-Sex Secondary Educational Spaces to Benefit Black Boys

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Came from a Woman, Game from a Woman:
The Enactment of Role Model and Mentor Identities by Black Women Leading Single-Sex Secondary Educational Spaces to Benefit Black Boys

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Anthony Craig Jackson

2024

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Came from a Woman, Game from a Woman:

The Enactment of Role Model and Mentor Identities by Black Women Leading

Single-Sex Secondary Educational Spaces to Benefit Black Boys

by

Anthony Craig Jackson

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2024

Professor Tyrone C. Howard, Chair

The historical context of education in the United States reveals a consistent failure by American schooling to effectively educate Black boys. Multiple indicators of how Black male students are underserved have necessitated interventions to reverse decades of adverse outcomes. The single-gender school design became one such intervention dedicated to creating validating and affirming educational spaces in response to the educational crisis facing Black boys, with Black male adult school leaders, role models, and mentors being essential components of these schools.

The minimal and mixed research on the single-sex approach on behalf of Black students–boys and girls–is reflected in both advocacy for the model as well as critiques questioning its efficacy based on the model assuming a reductive notion of masculinity that calls for Black men

only to lead these all-boys schools and programs serving Black boys. Hence, Black women leading these spaces are very rare. This study contributes to the research guided by three questions: (1) What mentorship and role modeling beliefs and actions do Black women school leaders enact as essential for promoting the academic success of Black boys in all-male schools or programs for boys of color? (2) How do African American males who graduated from all-male Black secondary programs led by Black women perceive these women's influence as mentors and role models? (3) How do parents of these former students view the advantages or limitations of Black women leading single-sex, all-male educational environments aimed at supporting the academic and social-emotional growth of their sons?

My research design consisted of individual interviews with study participants–women school leaders uniquely positioned as heads of all-male schools and programs serving Black boys, former students of the school leaders, and parents of the former students–guided by open-ended interview questions, focus groups of the former students and parents, environmental scans of the leaders' current school workspaces, and documents review. The data collected generated several important findings highlighted by Motherhood Leadership which was characterized by authentic, humanizing, and caring relationships between the leaders and their students. The women leaders nurtured the boys by creating intentional and organic soft spaces to support their holistic success. Implications for practice and recommendations for future research are discussed. The study honors the legacy of historical excellence of Black women for racial uplift and centers the voices of contemporary Black women leaders often silenced in the educational enterprise of single-sex school spaces designed to benefit Black boys.

The dissertation of Anthony Craig Jackson is approved.

H. Samy Alim

Pedro Antonio Noguera

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2024

DEDICATION

To my parents, Isabelle and Lynwood. Mama, I know ancestral presence is real because you have always been near, guiding me throughout the 51 years since I was last graced by your physical being. Daddy, I wish I could have accomplished this while you were here. I took too long. I am sorry.

To the legion of women–othermothers–who rallied around me after Mama transitioned and later still. Among the ancestors are my grandmama Dobbie and cousins Pat and Debbie. My cousin Patsy, now the family matriarch, and mum-in-law, Vivia, are presently loving on and guiding me to live gracefully and graciously.

To my amazing offspring, pride, and joy, the remarkable son Jared and the awesome daughter Michelle. To my brothers Kevin and Chris. Chris, save a place on the other side for Kev and me. And to my wife and colleague, Dr. Jean Pennicooke, my heart and soul.

To Center, TX, Forrest City, AR, and Los Angeles. As great migration origins and destination, respectively, each is important as context to my being, doing, and becoming.

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and clarity to the near-mythic idea of the principal Ms. Bright represented in my young mind. You set a standard for the principalship that continues today.

Finally, I want to thank Dr. Noma Lemoine, my mentor and role model who changed my professional trajectory by demanding that my work be grounded in culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy and leadership, informed by extensive reading and research, and shared widely through high-quality professional development to always overserve Black children and other underserved student groups. Mama Noma, I am indebted to you.

VITA

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A former African American school principal recounted with excitement the work of Black women administrators and teacher leaders at her school to disrupt the underachievement of the boys in attendance, all of whom were African American and Latinx. They had collaborated to create an all-boys academy within the larger coeducational high school, intent on reversing academic outcomes for their boys who were struggling to maintain passing grades in the school's advanced, college preparatory curriculum. The administrator spoke with admiration about the women and, specifically, one of the teacher leaders whom she referred to as the "boy whisperer" because of that teacher's success in reaching and teaching boys–especially those African American students that had proven both behaviorally and academically challenging for her Black male colleagues.

The former school leader shared that she had advocated for the teacher, then a principal herself, to become the founding leader of an all-Black and Latinx boys academy that recently opened in the subdistrict where she worked. She related her disappointment when she was told that the colleague would not even be allowed to apply because only men were being considered for the job (J. Woods, personal communication, August 6, 2019).

This conversation mirrors a well-known–and illegal–story in the United States: a highly qualified candidate is denied an influential position because of her gender (Campbell & Hahl, 2022). The story inspired me to examine the all-boys secondary school model serving Black male students and its historical development within American schooling. As a researcher for whom only Black women have been professional mentors and role models, being a Black man and educational leader supervising and collaborating with school principals reinforces the very dynamics I investigate in this study.

My experience also privileged me with a professional network in which a Black woman could share a narrative common in the United States: a highly qualified candidate is denied a position because of her gender. This narrative also reflects how, contrary to their leadership presence in the elementary grades, women leaders are disproportionally underrepresented at the secondary level (Taie & Lewis, 2022). Importantly, it prompted my interrogation of the embedded gendered assumptions about role model theory and nurture that undergird ideas about the efficacy of the single-sex model in benefitting Black boys. Since the few empirical studies published on the subject are inconclusive in establishing the positive effects of single-sex schooling on the academic achievement of low-income students of color (Goodkind, 2013), my study examines an aspect of single-sex schooling for Black males that is ripe for further research.

Summary of the Problem

Black male educational underachievement drives a growing body of research by scholars seeking to examine why U.S. schools continue to produce educational outcomes for African American boys below those of their white counterparts (Bristol, 2015; Donnor & Brown, 2011; Howard, 2013; Howard & Flennaugh, 2011; Jackson & Moore III, 2006; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014; Miller Dyce, 2013; Noguera, 2003). Disparities in graduation rates, Advanced Placement course enrollment, special education placement, grade level retention, and school suspensions and expulsions endure (Holzman, 2006; Toldson et al., 2009). These studies have highlighted how educational, social, and economic measures paint a bleak picture of how Black boys' struggles remain entrenched and difficult to remedy in both schools and greater society (Bristol, 2015; Quigley & Mitchell, 2018).

One response to the historical failure of U.S. schooling to effectively educate Black boys has been the creation of all-boys secondary academies (Fergus & Noguera, 2010; Goodkind,

2013; Mitchell & Stewart, 2013; Singh et al., 1998). Scholars posit that these single-sex models of schooling serving Black boys create educational spaces–schools or programs within schools–that serve as critical *counter spaces* to the anti-Black hegemony of traditional school environments, thus allowing for the recognition of Black boys' humanity and promoting institutional actions targeting Black boys' underachievement (Terry et al., 2014).

Fundamental to the creation of these single-sex educational spaces serving Black boys is a belief in the benefits of same-sex role models and same-sex relationship building. These spaces are popularly considered to result in mentoring experiences for students within a culture of discipline and structure (Brown & Donnor, 2011) while existing in community with Black students who are cared for and empowered (Lynn, 2002). Note that I use the term *single-sex educational spaces* and *all-boys of color schools and programs* interchangeably and in the manner that Terry et al. (2014) define:

> Any educational setting, typically (but not always) school-based, in which students are separated by sex as a component of a broader pedagogical strategy developed to achieve one or more educational objectives associated with students' academic performance outcomes and/or overall 'citizenship' within the school community (p. 669)

Hence, these single-sex educational spaces that serve either all or mostly Black boys are overwhelmingly constructed with an expectation that Black men will fill school leadership and instructor roles. This idea is based on a belief that these men possess a care and compassion for, along with an organic understanding of, Black boys' and adolescents' relational learning styles, verve, and ways of being and doing (Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Terry et al., 2014). In this model, Black men are viewed as an essential support for increasing Black boys' academic outcomes. These educational spaces for Black boys are influenced by role model theory, which is

in turn grounded in Critical Race Theory analyses, and the ideas therein undergird my theoretical framework (see Chapter Two).

Role model theory promoting Black student success is often situated in a Critical Race Theory (CRT) analysis of the failure of U.S. schooling to effectively educate Black boys (Lynn, 2002; Mitchell & Stewart, 2013; Quigley & Mitchell, 2018; Terry et al., 2014). Notions of Black men identifying as father figures and engaged in "other fathering" relationships with their Black male students equip them with an understanding of the communities in which the schools are located, and especially, the needs of boys they educate (Brooms, 2017). Additionally, role model theory is often explicated in tandem with mentoring constructs to develop an understanding of how Black men support Black boys in single-sex educational spaces.

Formal mentoring–notably school-based mentoring (SBM)–while often viewed as related to role modeling, extends beyond simply providing an example to be looked up to, and emphasizes the quality, frequency and duration of interaction to build a trusting relationship between a youth and non-parent adult (Kanchewa et al., 2014; Wyatt, 2009). Community-based mentoring programs are not solely a CRT construct, having been advocated for since the 1980's often as a signature feature of Afrocentric educational models, particularly Rites of Passage programs (Brown & Donnor, 2011).

Background of the Problem

Single-sex secondary schools have been created as one way to address the failure of traditional schooling for Black boys. This trend extended from a focus on boys in general being disadvantaged by schooling–an idea that gained credence in the 1990's and represented a shift from previous decades-long beliefs about girls being underserved in schools, especially in the subjects of mathematics and science (Keddie & Mills, 2009). This shift in emphasis from girls'

to boys' academic outcomes based on their perceived struggles in school, was accompanied by an increase in single-sex public schools in the United States. Between 1995 and 2008 the number of single-sex public schools increased from two to 49. Between 2002 and 2009, the number of single-sex classrooms in United States public schools grew from 12 to 518 (J. Jackson, 2010).

During the 1980's and 1990's, Leonard Sax and Michael Gurian were leading proponents of so-called brain-based research in support of biologically determined gendered learning styles for the mostly white students they observed (an unsupported argument that was used to counter feminist legal opposition to single-sex schools at the time (J. A. Williams, 2010). Conversely, the predominant discourse on single-sex schooling in the 2000's focused on Black children in general and Black males in particular (V. L. Williams, 2004).

Despite the research on gender-based learning styles and the focus on all-boys schools supporting Black males, the extant research on the impact of such schools is lacking, leading to disagreement about gender-based learning differences and the creation of single-sex schools based on these differences (J. Jackson, 2010; Whitmire & Bailey, 2010).

Few empirical studies support the effectiveness of single-sex K-12 education that control for the key variables of socioeconomic background and parental involvement (Whitmire & Bailey, 2010; V.L. Williams, 2004). Mitchell and Stewart (2013) maintain that there exists a lack of evidence supporting the efficacy of single-gender schooling for boys of color. Conversely, single-sex schooling for African American students has resulted in some gains (J. Jackson, 2010; Whitmire & Bailey, 2010). In an important three-year empirical study focusing on the effects of all-male secondary academies for Black and Latinx boys, Fergus and Noguera (2010) identified key instructional foci that positively impacted educational experiences and outcomes for the students: social/emotional learning, rigorous curricula, culturally relevant curricula, community

service, and a nurturing, caring environment Additionally, Davis (2003) and Fergus & Noguera (2010) identified Black all-male academies' emphasis on Black male role models as one approach to mediating negative gender socialization and toxic notions of masculinity, signaling a non-academic benefit to single-sex schooling for Black boys.

One glaring omission in the formation of and research on the benefits of Black all-male academies is the contribution of Black women. The critical historical role of Black women educators in both successful teaching and effective school leadership of Black children is well documented. Black women like Lucy Craft Laney (1854-1933), Mary McLeod Bethune (1875-1955), Nannie Helen Burroughs (1883-1961), Charlotte Hawkins Brown (1883-1961), and Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964) enacted a movement between the late 19th and mid-20th centuries that saw the first Black women principals of schools in the United States, and Black women leading and/or founding schools for Black children and Black girls (Arao, 2016; Collier-Thomas, 1993; Giles, 2006; Thomas & Jackson, 2007) This movement was situated within a socio-historical context in which de jure and, subsequently, de facto segregation combined with gendered notions of the teaching profession to spur conditions for Black women to occupy an important place in educating Black students (McCluskey, 1997; Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Randolph, 2004). Like the men leading all-Black male academies of today, these Black women became recognized as educational leaders who built schools that were responsive to Black children, families, and communities (Murtadha & Watts, 2005).

Even so, in the face of birthing, loving, protecting, raising, and praising Black boys, along with a notable historical tradition of establishing excellent schools in support of racial uplift, Black women have been rendered mostly absent from leadership of single-sex educational spaces to effectively educate Black males in the current times. The impetus of my case study

seeks to address the power and possibility of Black women and their leadership styles to increase the efficacy of single-gender schooling for Black boys; this contribution to the literature builds upon the research of Fergus and Noguera (2010) that identified the importance of social/emotional learning, rigorous curricula, culturally relevant curricula, community service, and a nurturing, caring environment.

Clarifying the Problem

As presented in the previous sections, the conceptualization of all-male, all-Black educational spaces adhere to role model and mentoring constructs ultimately aimed at positive educational outcomes for Black boys. However, the current conditions facing Black male student achievement in the U.S. correlate with two critical factors that call into question the efficacy of these educational spaces. First, there exists a limited and gendered notion of who qualifies to be a role model and/or mentor for African American boys (Brockenbrough, 2012; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Woodson & Pabon, 2016). Making the leap from removing girls–namely, Black girls–from the educational setting as a requirement for Black boys' school success to erasing Black women as school leaders so that those Black boys experience role models that support their success, defies over a century of Black women serving in this very capacity. Additionally, there is a rich history of Black women designing and leading rigorous, loving, and nurturing school experiences for Black girls and boys (McCluskey, 1997; Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Taken together, these factors should portend the unquestioned ability of Black women to serve as role models and mentors to their Black male students and to fill school leader roles at all-boys of color schools.

That the designers of mostly Black all-boys of color secondary schools adhere to role model and mentoring as defining characteristics of such schools necessarily results in few

women serving in leadership capacities and is evident of common assumptions that undergird the model. Fergus and Noguera (2010) speak to such assumptions that focus on discipline, structure, and a competitive environment:

> Our own research on single-sex schools leads us to believe that these similar approaches are more than just a coincidence and in fact serve as further evidence that assumptions about gender (and as we shall show race and class) are so pervasive and commonplace that they easily become embedded within the theory and practice guiding the development of single-sex schools, *unless they are deliberately exposed and contested* (emphasis mine) (p.195).

Moreover, empirical data comparing same- versus cross-gender matching for boys in formal mentoring programs reveal no differences in overall mentoring relationship quality, duration, intensity, and youth outcomes (Kanchewa et al., 2014).

In summary, there is scant empirical research supporting the positive effects of all-Black male schools on the educational experiences and academic outcomes of the students attending these schools (Fergus & Noguera, 2010; Whitmire & Bailey, 2010; Williams, 2004). A review of the literature reveals no studies that specifically examine how faculty in all-boys of color secondary educational spaces perceive Black women leaders. Nor are there studies that address qualitative gender differences in terms of impact on school leaders' role modeling and/or mentoring of Black boys in all-boys of color schools or programs. I address this gap in the literature through my research investigating the impact of gender differences in all-boys of color schools/programs. My research project examines the experiences of Black women who have led predominantly Black and Latino all-boys educational spaces that serve Black male adolescents, providing a much needed and rich descriptive study of the experiences and impact of women in

this unique leadership context. In doing so, my research can inform how (and why) more women can (and should) successfully lead all-boys secondary academies predominantly serving Black male students.

Research Questions

Black women school leaders are the subjects of a qualitative critical case study in which interviews are used to capture and explore their experiences leading all-boys schools and/or programs that serve Black students. The study examines the decision-making that accompanied their leadership approaches, and how their identities as Black women influence them being role models for and mentors to the Black boys enrolled at their schools. It also articulates the impact of their leadership on the lives of several Black young men under their guidance from the perspective of the young men and their parents. The following research questions guide my study:

1. In what ways do Black women school leaders enact role model and mentor identities when interacting with Black boys in all-boys-of-color secondary schools and/or programs?
    a. What aspects of the role model and/or mentoring relationship do Black women school leaders value as important to the educational success of Black boys in all-boys of color secondary schools/programs?
2. How do African American males, who graduated from all-male Black secondary academies and/or programs headed by Black women, perceive the impact of the women as mentors and role models?
3. How and what do parents of these former Black students view as either the benefits and/or shortcomings of Black women leading these single-sex, all male school spaces

specifically designed to foster the academic success and social-emotional well-being of their male children.

Research Design

Site and Population

The sample population consisted of two women school leaders, five former male students of one school leader, and two former male students of the other school leader, respectively, along with two parents of one school leader's former students. The focus of the study required that frequent interactions occurred between the former students and school leaders, which is an essential aspect of the study in terms of framing role modeling and mentoring and their impact on educational success. (Gordon et al., 2010).

The participants for this study were drawn from:

1. A now defunct all-boys-of-color secondary program in California. The former leader of the all-boys of color male academy program that existed within a coeducational high school is a primary participant in my research.
2. A currently operating all-boys of color parochial high school in California. The then principal of the school when I collected my data is a primary study participant.
3. The young African American adults who attended the schools when the Black women were school leaders and who have since graduated the school or program.
4. Parents of the African American graduates of the school or program led by one of the Black women school leaders.

Criteria for School and Program Selection

Because I examine Black women school leaders' enactment of role model and mentor identities in their interactions with their students in single-sex educational spaces for Black boys,

I chose schools and programs that provide these populations for my study. These single-gender, all-boys secondary schools and programs are/were among the few locally or nationally with Black women leaders. The average population of Black students across both school models when the former student participants were enrolled was 36.5%, providing ample students from which to recruit for my study. Although current students are not study participants, former students are essential to perceptions of the school and or program as being effective in providing leaders who were role models and mentors.

Research Methods

This case study seeks to derive meaning based on the beliefs and attitudes of Black women leaders in all boys-of-color secondary educational spaces and the Black men who were their students. Data collection occurred through virtual face-to-face interviews of two Black women school leaders who at the time were or previously had been at the helm of a single-sex school and program for Black boys. For each of the Black women leaders, I interviewed two to five former students of theirs who are graduates of their schools or programs. Additionally, after the individual interviews, I conducted focus groups consisting of the young men. I I also conducted environmental scans of the school workspaces of the women where they were employed and reviewed external documents from one school setting–weekly newsletters to the school community.

Significance of the Study

My research intends to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on successfully educating Black boys, given the historical challenges of the institution of school – both public and private – to do so. It seeks to examine an expansive approach to role modeling for and mentoring of Black males by engaging in critical analyses of the embedded assumptions about

who Black boys can, and should, look up to, build relationships with, and seek guidance from. Gendered assumptions inevitably and significantly reduce the pool of mentors and role models available to Black boys in all-boys of color educational spaces at the secondary level. My study proposes exploring delimiting role modeling and mentoring constructs. In doing so, I reaffirm and reposition Black women to a deserved place leading Black education initiatives for improving the learning outcomes and life trajectories for adolescent Black males.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The academic underachievement of Black male K-12 students has been extensively examined by scholars (J. F. L. Jackson & Moore III, 2006; Mitchell & Stewart, 2013; P. Noguera, 2008; Terry et al., 2014). The language used in both popular media and scholarly studies illustrates just how dire the educational situation facing Black boys is perceived. Black boys are said to be in *crisis* (Mitchell & Stewart, 2013), are characterized as *endangered* (Jackson & Moore, 2006), and their condition is described as *grim* (T. King, 2011) and *desperate* (V. L. Williams, 2004). These portrayals align with similar findings for boys in general (Whitmire & Bailey, 2010; Williams, 2010). These studies confirm that, beyond schooling, practically every social and economic indicator reveal that Black boys are being woefully underserved by American society (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005).

The research quantifying the educational challenges that Black boys face in America's public schools is abundant. Black boys are undereducated, overrepresented in special education, underrepresented in gifted and talented programs, and under enrolled in Advanced Placement courses (Schott Foundation, 2015). They are more than twice as likely to be suspended from school, 13 times as likely to be expelled, and one and one half times less likely to graduate high

school than their White peers (Harper, 2014). Scholars, teachers, administrators, and policy makers have all grappled for decades with crafting a suitable response to the historical failure of American public schools to successfully educate Black boys.

Role model and mentor constructs undergird the creation of all Black boys secondary educational spaces as a response to the crisis of Black male academic underachievement. In interrogating how Black women are excluded from leadership roles in these school spaces, this chapter will link historical and contemporary Black education movements in the US and their common desire to foster racial uplift. The chapter begins with an overview of the Black boy educational crisis in U.S. schools, citing data that frames the degree to which the nation's schools have been derelict in their duty to educate Black boys (and girls), and hence, have failed to fulfill their mission to effectively educate all children. I will then explore the push to create single-sex schools as one response to American education's negligence to ensure that Black boys' learning is commensurate to their White counterparts. This exploration will include delving into the historical development of single-sex education in the United States. An examination of role model and mentoring approaches supporting the creation of single-sex school spaces for Black boys unsubstantiated by research will follow. Additionally, I will interrogate the emphasis on gender matching within these role model and mentor constructs. I will then explore how the equivocal data on the effect of single-sex schools in general and, specifically, all-boys academies serving Black males, might become more concrete by embracing Black women in leadership positions of these educational spaces. Finally, I will outline the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality, and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies that ground this study.

The Crisis of U.S. Schools' Failure to Effectively Educate Black Boys

A 2015 education report provides sobering statistics on the plight of Black boys in U.S. public schools. This report, published by Schott Foundation and titled 50 State Report on Black Males and Public Education, includes the preface *Black Lives Matter*. One could hardly be at fault for questioning whether the lives of young Black males are seen as mattering when the educational evidence speaks to the converse. The report identifies the systemic nature of how American schooling under educates Black boys while rejecting the deficit idea that Black boys are the problem (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Ferguson, 2003; Howard, 2013). For instance, the report identified the national average high school graduation rate for all 50 states (2012-13 cohort) at 59% of Black males compared to 80% for White males. Zeroing in on the 56 school districts in the U.S with the highest enrollment of Black students reveals even bleaker statistics: the estimated four-year graduation rate average for Black males in these school districts (2011-12 cohort) was under 43% (Schott Foundation, 2015). Schools suspension rates reveal similarly troubling data with the national average for Black boys at 15% with Whites at 5% (Schott Foundation, 2015). This double-digit variance was present in the 19 states displaying the greatest "push out" gaps in the U.S., with Wisconsin at a 16.3% variance between Black and White boys' suspension rates and Missouri showing a 16.2% difference.

The 2019 National Assessment on Education Progress (NAEP) data render an equally dim picture, illustrating that nationally, Black males score below all other racial/ethnic groups in percent proficient on Reading and Math assessments. Eighth grade Black males' proficiency rates on the most recent NAEP assessments are 11% and 12%, respectively. Contrast these numbers with those of White males who achieve proficiency rates of 36% in reading and 45% in mathematics (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Howard (2013) provides an extensive overview of data that disclosed how poorly U.S. schools are performing when it comes to educating Black boys. Notably, he highlighted 2009 U.S. Department of Education data reporting that Black males in grades 4, 8, and 12 who do not possess learning disabilities achieved reading scores lower than White males *with* disabilities in the same grades. Comparison data six years later reflect that Black males made some improvement: Eighth grade White males with disabilities performed 6 percentage points behind their Black male peers who have no disabilities. Yet, White males in the 12th grade with disabilities achieved proficiency rates only 3 percentage points below Black males in the 12th grade with no disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Advanced Placement (AP) course enrollment data further confirm how schools are under educating Black boys and limiting their post-secondary opportunities. Schools where large numbers of Black students attend are likely to offer fewer AP courses, resulting in just 7.6% of Black males enrolled in AP courses in 2011-12 contrasted with 18.4% of White males (Schott Foundation, 2015). These numbers have contributed to a crisis narrative that have engendered critical responses seeking to remedy the educational challenges historically facing Black boys in the United States.

Single-Sex Educational Spaces in Response to Black Boys in Crisis

The focus on boys in general as a group being disadvantaged by schooling gained credence in the 1990s. The attention on the boys' challenges in school represented a shift from the previous decades-long belief about girls being underserved in schools, especially in the subjects of mathematics and science (Keddie & Mills, 2009). This shift in emphasis from girls' to boys' academic outcomes, based on their perceived struggles in school, was accompanied by an increase in single-sex public schools in the United States. Between 1995 and 2008, the

number of single-sex public schools increased from two to 49. Between 2002 and 2009, the number of single sex classrooms in United States public schools grew from 12 to 518 (J. Jackson, 2010).

In a similar vein, all-boys, all Black secondary schools were increasingly established in response to the historical failure of Black boys' education (Bracey, 2006; Quigley & Mitchell, 2018; Singh et al., 1998; Terry et al., 2014). This particular school model is based on a theory of change in which nurturing Black male identity with positive role models and mentoring are key constructs (Fergus & Noguera, 2010).

A Brief History of Single-Sex Education

Formal education in the United States has its origins in single-sex schools for males, with boys attending schools while girls remained at home (Rigdon, 2008). With the arrival of the 19th century, all-girls schools joined the U.S. educational landscape (Bracey, 2006). Schools that combined the education of boys and girls coincided with compulsory education laws enacted by the federal government in the early 20th Century. These coeducational schools were an economic response to these laws since building and operating separate schools to meet the needs of all boys and girls was not fiscally practical (Rigdon, 2008). As a result, single-sex education became almost the sole domain of private and parochial schools (Bracey, 2006).

With the passage of Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, discrimination based on sex in all federally funded programs and activities was outlawed. Title IX was created to address pervasive sexual discrimination against girls and women in society, especially within education (U.S. Department of Justice, 1972). While not outright banning public single-sex schools, Title IX placed strict limitations on the creation of these schools and cemented institutionalized coeducational schooling in the U.S. (Bigler & Signorella, 2011; Riordan, 1990).

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Bush administration's Department of Education, through its 2001 No Child Left Behind reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), allowed for the creation of single sex schools by way of Innovative Program funds (Mitchell & Stewart, 2013; Terry et al., 2014; J. A. Williams, 2010; V. L. Williams, 2004). These amended guidelines reversed a decade long prohibition against single-sex school programs, based on such schools being viewed as discriminatory. This change to federal education policy was made without any study being commissioned to determine best practices that could guide schools and school districts in the implementation of single-sex education models (Whitmire & Bailey, 2010). Amending the Title IX law resulted in the aforementioned proliferation of single-sex public schools across the United States, which grew from 11 in 2002 to over 90 in 2010 (J. A. Williams, 2010).

Bigler and Signorella (2011) identify three primary factors driving the push to reestablish single-sex schools as an option for parents and students in U.S. public education. First, there were several publications written between 1990 and 1995 that captured the popular imagination as well as the attention of political leaders and pundits. Reports like *How Schools Shortchange Girls* were instrumental to the argument that coeducational schooling adversely impacted girls (AAUW, 1995). Second, the performance of U.S. students on standardized measures of achievement, in comparison to their international counterparts, galvanized an increase in support for single-sex education. In the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk,* the "crisis" narrative became a pervasive and influential critique of U.S. education as students were outperformed by peers in other industrialized nations. This prompted various educational reforms, with single-sex education joining school choice vouchers and charter schools as signature developments of reform, especially regarding the education of poor African American and Latinx children.

Finally, according to Bigler and Signorella (2011), neuroimaging advances in the field of psychology prompted claims about the differences in male and female brains, resulting in the arguments that educating boys and girls in coeducational spaces goes against science.

Despite these changes to educational policy, research on the success of single-sex schooling is largely inconclusive. One issue with conducting rigorous, empirical studies is the challenge of designing randomized analyses due to voluntary enrollment in single-sex settings, causing single-sex schooling effects to be confounded by other factors such as motivated teachers, socio-economic background, prior learning, and selective admissions (Bracey, 2006; Pahlke et al., 2014). As an example of this difficulty, in a comprehensive review of the research on single-sex schools' impact on educational success, Mael et al. (2005) offered the caveat that they could not conduct a proper meta-analysis of the available research studies on single-sex schools because the studies did not meet the scientific standard that would qualify them for a meta-analysis study.

Nonetheless, their review summarized several quantitative studies' findings on single-sex versus coeducational schooling effects on a number of outcomes: (1) academic accomplishment, (2) long-term academic accomplishment, (3) student adaptation and social-emotional development (both concurrent and long term), (4) gender inequity, and (5) the impact of school culture and climate on performance indicators like academic aspirations, leadership opportunities, and student, parent, and teacher satisfaction. While the results were not definitive in favoring single-sex or coeducational schools, they identified a greater number of studies detailing positive academic accomplishment effects from a single-sex school approach than from coeducational school environments; there were no differences between the models regarding the other measurable outcomes (Mael et al., 2005).

In a qualitative, ethnographic study of seven single-sex academies in California, Hubbard and Datnow (2005) identified factors that initially resulted in positive effects on students' educational experiences enrolled in a single-sex school after previously attending a coeducational one. The authors noted that the schools were founded on the common assumption that an all-boys educational space would limit distractions that arise from having girls in the class; their study partially validated this belief. However, their findings suggest that the positive effects were due to an intersection of the single-sex environment with two additional factors. One factor was funding that significantly impacted the schools' ability to secure special resources, such as small class sizes, additional teachers, on-site health care facilities, and counseling. The second factor was the presence of caring teachers, which was as impactful on the students' experiences as the new single-sex environment and the state-provided special funding (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005). The study identified the ability of teachers to build trusting relationships with the students (as measured by student-teacher conversations) to be particularly important; they further discovered that these conversations took on a heightened effectiveness when the teacher shared gender, race, and socioeconomic background with their students. Findings like these were accompanied by an intuited collective community sense about the viability of exclusive school spaces that affirmed Black males and removed them from learning environments that placed them at risk. It was in this context that the movement for single-sex schools focusing on Black boys was spawned.

Black Boys in All Boys of Color Educational Spaces

Despite the lack of rigorous research supporting single-gender education, a predominant discourse on single-sex schooling developed around low income and minority students, particularly with Black children and Black males (Goodkind, 2013; U.S. Department of

Education, 2008; V. L. Williams, 2004). Initial attempts at single-sex public schools in the United States were composed of experimental all-male Black schools and/or classrooms in public school districts in Detroit, Milwaukee, Baltimore, and Portland (Mitchell & Stewart, 2013). The Detroit effort, however, was met with spirited legal resistance by the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Organization for Women's Education and Defense Fund. Together, these organizations filed a lawsuit against Detroit Public Schools on the grounds that the single-sex model was discriminatory against its female students (Cummings, 1993; Terry et al., 2014; V. L. Williams, 2004). On August 16, 1991, the federal judge presiding over the lawsuit, while acknowledging that interventions were necessary for Black male students given their alarming academic underachievement, ruled that the Detroit model was unconstitutional and in violation of Title IX amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act (ESEA) of 1972 (The Associated Press, 1991) . The ruling established the legal precedent that discouraged single-sex public schools. That precedent would endure for over two decades until changes to ESEA were instituted just after the turn of the century.

Revisions to the ESEA under the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, allowed wider latitude for the implementation of single-gender schools as data supporting the underservice of Black males in public schools persisted (Public Law 107-110, 2002). Based on their empirical study, albeit with a small subject sample, Singh et al. (1998) made the following theoretical assertion over twenty years ago about experimental single-sex organizational models that still has relevance today:

> It is possible that the single-sex setting may not enhance the educational environment for White males in the same way it affects females and students of non-White minority groups. In the United States, European American males are the dominant group and thus

> derive a psychological benefit in mixed groups. The educational environments created by different class organizations based on race/ethnicity and gender deserve closer scrutiny, as does the examination of bias based on similar characteristics in classrooms. (p.165)

Singh's idea that single-sex education may deliver greater benefit to girls and minoritized student groups than for White male students represents the inverse of schooling in the United States – even the mixed group coeducational school models that followed what were essentially schools for White boys only – as existing to academically and emotionally benefit White male students. Public schooling was designed to align with White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) norms (Spring, 2016). For girls and Black boys who have been educationally positioned opposite to and beneath White boys, responsive schooling that elevates their needs is foundational to the idea of contemporary single-sex educational spaces being equitable and just (Mitchell & Stewart, 2013; Quigley & Mitchell, 2018; Terry et al., 2014).

Approximately thirty years later, critical race theorists offer a perspective aligned with the idea expressed by Singh et al. (1998) about the benefits of single-sex schooling as an intervention for Black boys. This intercession is characterized by increased academic engagement, caring teachers, and an abundant adult Black male presence. These scholars identify multiple benefits beyond increased academic achievement, most of which result from placing Black boys in educational environments that are validating and affirming, and that lessen anti-Black trauma and marginalization characteristic of Black male school experience (Quigley & Mitchell, 2018). Such thinking is prevalent among scholars and popular with lay Black people too. Absent of empirically supported evidence, the common rationale espousing single-sex schooling as an intervention for Black boys is derived from an intuited sense of academic, social, and emotional harm reduction for Black boys. Aspects of traditional schooling in educational

spaces deemed harmful to the Black male psyche, spirit, and intellect are removed and replaced with academic and social-emotional approaches perceived as essential to Black male success.

Brooms (2017) identifies such culturally and emotionally responsive schooling in the construct of "otherfathering" for adolescent Black boys in a single-sex urban education high school. Otherfathers are described by Brooms as "individuals with whom youth develop kinlike bonds, which are beyond the traditional student-teacher relationship" (2017, p. 31). He posits that adult Black male teachers demonstrating care for and commitment to students and their communities are essential to the building of strong bonds and meaningful relationships between students and teachers. These father figures are identified by students as vital to school experiences that strengthen Black boys' self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Therefore, the otherfather is part teacher, part role model, part mentor, and part father (Brooms, 2017).

It is important to note that Otherfathering is a male adaptation of the Black feminist construct of Othermothering, coined by sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, in which she interrogated the practice of Black Motherhood by examining research conducted by and for Black women as counterstory to dominant White male narrative distortions of Black women and mothers (Collins, 2000, 2005, 2016; Story, 2014). Feminist scholars have identified the following core tenets of Othermothering (Case, 1977; Collins, 1993, 2000, 2005, 2016; Story, 2014):

1. **Collective Responsibility** – Othermothering emphasizes community responsibility in child-rearing. It extends caregiving beyond biological parents to include women like aunts and neighbors, ensuring all children receive care and support.

2. **Nurturing as Resistance** – It serves as a form of resistance in marginalized communities, promoting strength, resilience, and solidarity and helping families thrive amid racial, economic, and social challenges.
3. **Emotional and Cultural Support** – Othermothers provide emotional, educational, and cultural support, mentoring children through societal challenges while preserving cultural values and identity.
4. **Expanding Motherhood** – Redefines motherhood by recognizing the crucial role of non-biological caregivers and highlighting extended kinship networks as vital sources of support.
5. **Activism and Social Justice** – Othermothers often engage in social activism, advocating for community well-being while promoting leadership and environments that uplift families.
6. **Feminist Framework**: Rooted in Black feminist and womanist ideals, this framework challenges individualistic, patriarchal views and centers the leadership and caregiving roles of women, especially Black women.

My study will explore Otherfathering's lineal connection to Othermothering. This is vital to framing my argument supporting Black women school leaders embodying significant roles as mentors to and role models for Black adolescent male students and being ably equipped to lead all-male educational spaces that advance Black boys' school success.

Creating school environments that focus on the unique needs of Black males is one way to promote long-term academic, cultural, social, emotional, and economic Black benefit (Quigley

& Mitchell, 2018). Foundational to these school environments, especially in single-sex contexts, are the concepts of *role modeling* and *mentoring*, which I unpack in the following sections.

Role Modeling

The Black male role model theory advances the idea that black male students see in role models positive possibilities for their futures (T. King, 2011). Whiting (2006) purports that scholarly identity is developed in part through role models and mentors who support students based on notions of leadership, masculinity, and manhood in addition to social and study skills. Holland's (1991) study characterizes an often expressed belief about the need for role models for Black male students and is representative of the thinking that frames the development of the of single-sex educational spaces for Black boys within a critical race theoretical model. He posits that as early as the primary school grades, Black boys' negative attitudes toward education stem from rejecting women as role models, based on a belief that the women are not relevant to the boy's experiences. While this is an extreme example of role model theory, more subtle justifications for Black male role models as an essential response to the educational challenges facing Black boys have historically been expressed.

Sabrina King's (1993) research was representative of scholars' focus on role models in the late 1980s and early 1990s. She too detailed the need for African American role models in schools. Expressing a belief that Black boys and girls needed to see the existence of Black teachers and leaders, she advanced the idea of Black teachers as role models and that they also reflect multifaceted roles such as surrogate parent figures, disciplinarians, counselors, and advocates.

In an empirical, randomized study on the effects of race, gender and ethnicity matching of students and teachers, Dee (2004) found strong evidence of a link between students receiving

instruction from a teacher of the same race. Dee's research supports adherence to the role model theory expressed by advocates for single-sex educational spaces for Black boys. Dee identified a statistically significant 4-5% increase in test scores in math for both Black boys and girls, when exposed to a teacher of their own race, and a statistically significant 3-6% increase in test scores in reading for Black boys and girls and White boys but not for White girls. Importantly, Dee determined that exposure to an own-race model over a four-year period reflected additional increases in student achievement of approximately 2 to 3 percentile points during each of third and fourth year. The implication, Dee notes, is that there is a cumulative impact on students' achievement as they get older and are exposed to an own-race teacher.

Teacher perceptions of students' performance are impacted by race and ethnicity, especially among low-income students and students in the southern United States. Dee conducted a separate study in which he explored beyond the *passive* teacher impact that represents role model effects, based simply on the presence of an own-race, ethnicity, and gender teacher (Dee, 2005). Dee demonstrated that teachers' previous experiences with students of a different race/ethnicity fed into their *active* teacher effects; as a result, these teachers perceived their students as more disruptive. When the students are of a low socioeconomic status, the students are 35-57% more likely to be viewed negatively by teachers of a different race/ethnicity. The implications of Dee's study for Black boys–many of whom are low-income due to the structural link of race to poverty–taught by White women (the vast majority of the teaching force) are disquieting.

Naman (2009) identified cultural and racial mismatch occurring in the classrooms of Black students, who make up the second largest minoritized student population in the United

States, at 17%. With just 6% of the teaching force being Black, she posits that this mismatch has negative consequences for the academic achievement of Black boys and girls.

Mentoring

Though related to role modeling, the concept of mentoring differs based on the frequency and duration of quality interactions between mentees and mentors (Gordon et al., 2010). Mentoring is viewed as an intervention and an important protective factor for Black boys (Fergus & Noguera, 2010; Gordon et al., 2010; Quigley & Mitchell, 2018). Noguera (2003) identifies community organizations and churches as compensatory entities that, in place of failing schools, use mentoring research to employ strategies that provide effective support for African American students. Mentoring is also presented as a form of leadership within a demonstrable ethic of care (Bass, 2012; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Noddings, 1992), whereby mentors acknowledge the barriers to learning and achievement opportunities, and thereby act on behalf of Black male students to assist them with negotiating anti-Black injustice and White supremacy (Quigley & Mitchell, 2018).

Watson, et al. (2016) examined the impact of culturally relevant care (CRC) on the mentor experiences of Black and Latinx students in an all-male school-based mentoring program. In this model, CRC is based on cultivating relationships with or "knowing" students before establishing expectations for them. A central tenet of CRC is building mutual trust between mentor and mentee, a process in which the vulnerabilities of both are leveraged to bring their experiences forward, sharing them openly among the community. This humanizing pedagogy honors the knowledges and experiences that Black and Brown youth enact in the school and classroom, viewing them as capacities to further develop rather than deficits in need

of repair. The mentoring identified education as a liberatory process and practice helping to grow the boys' individual and community improvement (Watson et al., 2016).

In a study of African centered mentoring program for Black male high school students delivered within a larger school-based counseling model, Wyatt (2009) found that participation in the program resulted in increased final grade point averages versus a control group. Similar to the experimental programs that characterized single-sex schooling for Black males in the early to mid 1990s in Milwaukee, Detroit, Baltimore and Portland (Mitchell & Stewart, 2013), the study emphasized Afrocentric school-based mentoring focused on improving academic achievement, increasing personal-social development, and enhancing collaborative enrichment activities incorporating post-secondary career and college interest and planning. In addition to increased academic achievement outcomes, participants self-reported the mentoring program significantly influenced their ability to connect the importance of academics to the real world as well as the need for support with goal setting and goal attainment.

One empirical study investigated the Benjamin E. Mays Institute's all-male Afrocentric mentoring program for 8th Grade Black boys. The study, which specifically looked to measure how the program positively influenced students' academic achievement and racial identification, reported significant findings. (Gordon et al., 2010). First, it established significant differences between math and reading standardized test scores between the mentored participants and the control group. Additionally, participants in the mentoring program exhibited higher positive racial identity status as well as identification with academics, and these factors contributed to higher GPA and standardized test scores.

Conversely, studies on the effects of gender and/or race- matched mentoring have produced differing results. Kanchewa, et al. (2014) employed a number of indices to measure the

influence of men and women mentors on boys experiences in school. When examining student achievement, truancy, and the quality, duration, and intensity of the mentoring relationship, they found no statistically significant differences for boys with men mentors and those with women mentors (Kanchewa et al., 2014). Similarly, Blake-Beard et al., (2011) found that there was no impact on academic outcomes in Science, Engineering, Technology, and Mathematics (STEM) when matching mentors and mentees by race or gender.

Kanchewa's and Blake-Beard's findings point to the opposing schools of thought among scholars regarding role-model theory and mentoring constructs. Some researchers have begun to challenge notions of role modeling and mentoring as reductionist assumptions that fail to acknowledge the complexities of Black men (Brockenbrough, 2012; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Woodson & Pabon, 2016). These scholars primarily focus on the racial and gendered basis for role model and mentoring approaches as inadequate proxies for Black men's pedagogical approaches. Studies have also found role modeling and mentoring attitudes to often hold women colleagues in contempt (Woodson & Pabon, 2016).

For example, Odih (2002) provides a critique of single-gender mentoring models. She describes these models as being authoritative and situated in masculinities that are oppressive and endemic to Black culture, and which further marginalize the voices of Black women. According to Odih, these mentoring practices reify "a dichotomized, confrontational model of male underachievement" which gets in the way of men and women engaging together in meaningful conversations about education policy and practice (2002, p.100). Noting that classical mentoring has historically excluded women, she identifies the essentialist nature of the traditional mentoring model as not acknowledging the multiple and various identities and experiences of Black men and boys. This racialized, hegemonic masculinity that drives

traditional mentoring is a construct that relegates alternative masculinities and women. Critiques of single-sex mentoring models, such as Odih's, gain importance when considering the integral role played by Black women in historically advocating for educational leadership and Black advancement.

The Historical Importance of Black Women Educational Leaders

Muhammad's (2020) notion of historical Black excellence provides a useful frame for connecting the important work of Black women educational leaders of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to Black men leading single -sex educational spaces for Black boys' close to 100 years later. Her research on Black education in America uses a socio-historical theoretical perspective that exhorts us to "know what we could learn from this historical Black excellence to reshape and reframe our schools today" (Muhammad, 2020). In the same vein, Murthada and Watts (2005) posit that historical biographical narratives of the past can help in developing theoretical models of logic and meaning to inform contemporary education spaces that serve Black communities and children.

Historical Black excellence provides a solid basis for drawing on the legacies of countless Black women who have been at the forefront of, and instrumental to, the cultural work of the Black educational enterprise. This cultural production has often gone unheralded due to societal marginalization of women – and historical erasure of Black women – from popular narratives about leadership. Women are excluded from the well-known list of names of the civil rights movement – King, Malcolm, Abernathy, Lewis, Farmer, and Wilkins. Beyond the perfunctory mention of Rosa Parks, women who were seminal leaders of the era, like Septima Clark, Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Diane Nash, and Dorothy Height, are missing from history textbooks and popular narratives chronicling the period. The same is true in education. A

notable example of this erasure of women is the seldom known fact that Olivia Davidson was the co-founder, along with Booker T. Washington, of Tuskegee Institute, the well-known historically Black college (McCluskey, 2014).

Lynn (2002) further articulates the importance of this historical excellence in describing Black women educational leaders who "not only introduced Black children to the necessary skills and knowledge for success in the mainstream society but also taught them how to fight for the liberation of Black people" in an era of harsh repression of Black efforts for freedom and self-determination (p. 123).

In the second half of this section, I highlight the work of six Black women who embody the idea of historical Black excellence. These six women – Fanny Jackson Coppin, Lucy Craft Laney, Mary McCleod Bethune, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Anna Julia Cooper – were all school founders and leaders who, though pioneers of Black educational leadership, have unfortunately experienced historical erasure. By discussing the significant role of these women, I contend that their legacies inform how and why Black educators might approach the creation of single-sex educational spaces for Black boys today. While by no means the only contributors to *historical Black excellence in education*, they are emblematic of the movement (Giles, 2006; Harley, 1996; McCluskey, 1997, 2014; Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Smith, 1982).

Fanny Jackson Coppin was one of the first Black women in the United States to obtain a college degree when she graduated from Oberlin College in 1865 (Perkins, 1982). She was born into enslavement in 1837, having her freedom purchased by an aunt. Coppin led the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, one of the most prestigious and well-respected Black schools in the country during the mid to late 19th Century. Her principalship at the school

represented the highest educational appointment of any Black woman in the nation at the time, making her the first Black principal of a school in the U.S (Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Perkins, 1982).

Lucy Craft Laney was the quintessential turn-of-the-century Black education activist, who founded the Haines Normal and Industrial Institute School in Augusta, Georgia in 1883. She was a role model for many of the other women highlighted here, especially for her emphasis on the education of Black girls and young women (McCluskey, 2014). The Haines Institute became a model school, delivering a mix of vocational education and a college preparatory curriculum. While an intellectual debate about which of these two curricular approaches was best for Black education was waged by notable Black educators and scholars Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois, Laney was lauded by both men.

Mary McCleod Bethune is the first and only Black woman, and possibly the only woman ever, to have founded a grammar school and grow it into an accredited university (McCluskey, 2014). In 1904, she opened the Daytona Educational and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls in Daytona, Florida. Like her mentor, Lucy Craft Laney, Bethune's focus in founding the Daytona school was on educating and developing Black girls. The school merged with the Cookman Institute of Jacksonville, Florida in 1923 to become a coeducational school. Today it stands as Bethune-Cookman University (Bethune-Cookman University Website, 2020).

Charlotte Hawkins Brown founded the Palmer Memorial Institute in 1902 in North Carolina. After its conversion to a private institution in 1947, the school became widely known for attracting the children of middle- and upper-class North Carolina Black families, members of the professional class who were dissatisfied with the education provided by the segregated public schools. A Black school in the Jim Crow south offering a classically liberal education focused on

intellectual development (instead of vocational/industrial learning), student travel, and educational and racial equality was a fairly subversive concept in 1947 (McCluskey, 2014). The school developed a national reputation for sending 95% of its graduates to college.

Nannie Helen Burroughs founded the National Training School for Women and Girls in 1909 under the auspices of the National Baptist Womens' Convention, at the time the largest Black women's organization in the country with over one million members. This made the school the first to be found and run by a Black women's organization. Burroughs also served as the school's president (Harley, 1996; McCluskey, 2014). Burroughs distinguished the school's vocational curriculum from others serving girls by including classes for vocations not typically available to girls and women at the time: shoe repair, barbering, and printing, among others. This attracted students from across the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa (McCluskey, 2014; Murtadha & Watts, 2005).

Anna Julia Cooper, a Womanist activist educator, ascended from teacher to principal at M Street School in Washington D.C. which would later become the well-known Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School. Cooper insisted that M Street provide an academic experience for Black students equal to what White students received elsewhere in the city (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Under her leadership, the school became renowned for sending students to Harvard, Yale, Brown, and Oberlin College (her alma mater), and received what amounted to accreditation from Harvard. Her book, *A Voice from The South (1892),* is viewed as a seminal work that details the intersection of race, gender, and class; moreover, it is regarded as a forebearer of womanist theory and Black feminist thought, in its activism for women's justice, and amplifying Black women's voice and participation in society (Giles, 2006).

All-Black Girls Schools: Prototypes for Today's All-Black Boys Educational Spaces

The socio-historical context in which these women founded and led schools is important to fully understanding Black women educational leaders' zeal and commitment to the spiritual, educational, and economic development of Black girls. Furthermore, this historical context serves as a parallel to the creation of single-sex educational spaces for Black boys, a century later. Both were born of a desire to leverage education for student and community empowerment. In spite of a constricting social order in which race and gender limited the advancement of Black women, each of these leaders were instrumental in the movement to employ education as a primary means for racial uplift (McCluskey, 2014). Lynn and Jennings (2009) posit that the work of African American male teachers evoke the pedagogical beliefs/practices of historical Black women educators in their compassionate and caring commitment to Black children (especially boys) and community. In this sense, these educators are the modern-day male counterparts to the Black feminist/womanist educational leaders of the past.

The six women discussed in this section situated the education of Black girls within the larger objective of racial uplift. Likewise, present day efforts to provide Black boys with uniquely-tailored humanizing, affirming, and validating school spaces engender critical race consciousness to promote long-term Black academic, cultural, emotional, and economic benefit (Quigley & Mitchell, 2018). In many ways, these women were pioneers of a nascent critical race perspective that foreshadowed theoretical developments considered foundational to the clarion call for single-sex educational spaces for Black boys almost one hundred years later.

Theoretical Framework

My research, which interrogates the gender-based dynamics related to leading single-sex educational spaces for Black boys, draws heavily from Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality,

and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies. Together, these bodies of scholarship provide the conceptual and theoretical framework within which I examine the interplay of race, gender, and educational praxis in single-sex educational initiatives supporting Black boys.

Critical Race Theory and Single-Sex Schooling

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a formal body of scholarship that originated in American legal studies in the mid-1980s and that emerged as a valid theoretical framework in the 1990s. Foundational to CRT is the idea that race is socially constructed and therefore deeply embedded in the legal, cultural, economic, and educational fabric of America. Arguing that race is a social construction shifted the focus of examining racial dynamics from the *individual* to the *structural* and *societal*. CRT centers the permanence of racism and race as endemic to society in the U.S. CRT examines structural barriers to social, political, and economic advancement due to racialized subordination of African Americans and other people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 1998; Lopez, 2003). Ladson-Billings (2021) identifies the following additional hallmarks of CRT: Derek Bell's idea of interest convergence–given that race is normative in the U.S., white people will only pursue racial justice when it serves them; intersectionality–introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw as a Black feminist analysis of the failure of traditional feminism to account for race, the term looks at overlapping oppressions and privileges of race, class, and gender; counternarrative as a tool to deliver counterstories to prevailing notions about race to illustrate racial justice principles. Nascent CRT concepts can be found in the writings of classic race theorists like W.E.B. DuBois while contemporary legal theorists like Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Cheryl Harris, Richard Delgado, Patricia Williams, Patricia Hill-Collins, and others have been at the forefront of framing CRT as an analytic tool (Collins, 1993; Crenshaw, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lopez, 2003).

Developed in legal scholarship, CRT emerged as similarly applicable to other social sciences, including education. Gloria Ladson Billings and Williams Tate IV were the scholars to highlight CRT as an applicable framework to examine the U.S. education system (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Since then, multiple scholars have shown how CRT serves as a potent framework to critically analyze schooling, its functions, and how it is structured to reinforce educational inequities (Lopez, 2003). Critical Race Theory "can be utilized to facilitate the identification of 'inequalities,' structural barriers, and devaluing of education in schools that have historically and disproportionately marginalized African American males" (Mitchell & Stewart, 2013, p. 386).

Not only does CRT allow scholars and practitioners to identify inequalities in schools serving Black males, but it also helps to frame policy changes. Several scholars have advocated establishing broad educational policy initiatives that support Black boys' scholastic achievement using a CRT lens. Warren et al., (2016)) propose using a CRT interpretive lens to center, elevate, and amplify Black male students' voices and stories within any analysis of their school experiences and the structural barriers impeding their academic success. These scholars viewed the Obama Administration's My Brother's Keeper initiative and its emphasis on tackling ongoing disparities in opportunities faced by boys and young men of color as an opportunity for educators, researchers, and policymakers to identify schools that likely produce positive academic outcomes for Black boys. For instance, Nelson's (2016) ethnographic study of a single-sex middle school for boys of color focused on using strategies that increase student engagement through the use of relational learning styles in order to enhance teacher-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions.

Terry et al. (2014) use a CRT lens to frame an argument in favor of single-sex schooling for Black males. They call for the creation of all-male schools for Black boys to build on previous and existing models of Black all-male schooling and posit that the critical race theory concept of "counterspace" is a way to understand how single-sex educational spaces might serve as an effective intervention for underperforming African American males. Counter spaces can – theoretically – create school settings at the high school level that are free from racial microaggressions and challenge deficit perspectives of students of color (Terry et al., 2014). Because some of these existing models meet accepted standards of school success like 100% high school graduation rates and four-year college and university acceptance rates, they have become viewed as being beyond reproach given the student achievement results they produce within the broader context of abject school failure to adequately educate Black students.

Advocates of single-sex schooling for Black boys also present an intuitive argument – based on a correlation between Black male underachievement and the dearth of Black men in the teaching workforce–calling for mostly Black male teachers and solely Black men as instructional leaders at all-boys schools. This role model theory of facilitating Black student success rests on a belief that Black men operate within an ethic of care for Black boys coupled with an natural understanding of Black boys' and adolescents' relational learning styles, verve, and ways of being and doing, that support increased academic outcomes (Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Terry et al., 2014). The Black male role model theory also advances the idea that black male students see in these role models positive possibilities for their futures (T. King, 2011). Scholars also draw on the research that favors single sex-schooling for girls even though the research supporting single-sex schooling for boys is less pronounced (Terry et al., 2014).

Intersectionality as an Analytical Framework

The concept of *intersectionality*, a component of CRT, derives from legal scholarship, and describes the simultaneous interlocking of systems of structural oppression that frame identity, e.g. race, gender, class, ability, religion, sexuality, and language (Carey & Yee, 2018). Legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw and sociologist Patricia Hill Collins are credited with coining the term and developing it, respectively, into a theoretical lens and framework. According to the theory of intersectionality, race, class, and gender are forces that overlap and intersect rather than exist as stand-alone influences on the lives of individuals (Carey & Yee, 2018).

Crenshaw, a critical race theorist, argued that a *single axis* race-dominant framework failed to adequately account for multiple dimensions of experience that groups, such as Black women, face. Crenshaw centered what she identified as *multiply burdened* Black women in her analysis, to counter their erasure in race and sex-discrimination cases (Crenshaw, 1989).

Meanwhile, Collins identified the contradictions in additive analytical models that prevent one from critically examining one's own oppression while simultaneously participating in the oppression of others (Collins, 1993). Calling for new analytic frames and categories that recognize race, class, and gender as interlocking oppressive structures, Collins advanced the idea that intersectionality pushes analyses to transcend dichotomous binaries of *either/or* thinking along dominant/subordinate absolutes. Such analysis is rooted in viewing race, class, and gender as "sometimes parallel and sometimes interlocking dimensions of the more fundamental relationship of domination and subordination" (Collins, 1993, pg. 26).

Intersectionality is used widely across the social sciences but, unlike CRT, underused in the literature on educational leadership focusing on preK-12 inequities (Agosto & Roland, 2018). It provides a vital framework for educators to analyze power relationships in schooling and

ascriptions of value and privilege. When applied to educational settings, it recognizes who is devalued, underprivileged, and, therefore, penalized, with regard to academic and/or social educational outcomes (Carey & Yee, 2018).

Intersectionality becomes a sound analytical framework to interrogate the purpose, utility, and efficacy of single sex schooling for Black boys in so-called crisis.

The Relationship Between Intersectionality and Critical Race Theory

The complex framing of single-sex schooling by critical race and intersectional feminist theorists who both profess a shared desire for increased educational outcomes and cultural agency for students marginalized and underserved by hegemonic systems requires close examination. Intersectionality as an analytical framework is inspired by and related to Critical Race Theory. Yet, scholars have disagreed about the efficacy of single-sex learning experiences when using these frameworks to examine the underachievement of Black boys in school.

Proponents of single-sex schooling for Black boys often do so through a CRT lens because CRT "acknowledges the centrality of race and racism in U.S. institutions and privileges the experimental knowledge and voice of people of color in those institutions" (Terry et al., 2014). In positioning race as a primary factor in students' social and academic interactions, scholars working from a CRT framework posit several ways to remedy traditional institutional shortcomings to change the narrative about troubled Black boys. One approach calls for segregating Black boys as a way of insulating them from hostile and dehumanizing educational environments prone to adultifying and criminalizing them. This separation creates a critical, nurturing, alternative space that validates and affirms Black boys in ways that the traditional institution cannot (Terry et al., 2014).

Critical Race Theory as an analytical framework responds to the demands of communities that advocate for gendered schooling based on an intuited sense that it is a valid intervention. Terry et al. (2014) identify "an enduring sense among practitioners, community-based advocates, and researchers that single-sex schooling is a viable option for intervening into the academic and social marginalization of African American males" (p.671). Nonetheless, the examination of Black underachievement through an exclusive focus on Black males illustrates the single-axis limitation that intersectionality seeks to address.

The Intersectional Critique of All-Black Boys Schools

Employing intersectionality as a framework has produced nuanced critiques of Black all-male schools championed by some CRT scholars that were created in response to the "Black boys in crisis" narrative. According to these scholars, using a framework that uncovers the interlocking dimensions and *power* relationships of race and gender operating within schools avoids the pitfalls of centering Black males in examinations of Black student underachievement. Crenshaw et al. (2015) posit that this sole focus on Black males excludes Black girls from critical examination of Black student underachievement and is a central contributor to the underreporting of suspension, expulsion, and other disciplinary data for Black female students. They charge that this underreporting leads to the inaccurate perception that Black girls experience no such school disciplinary challenges. To the contrary, their research calls attention to Department of Education data for public high schools in New York and Boston, that reveal Black girls as being statistically more prone than Black boys to be suspended and expelled when compared to their peers of the same gender (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

Intersectional scholars challenge the idea of segregating Black boys to employ Black male role models in teaching and school leadership positions. These theorists view the practice

as an essentialist and overly personal approach that fails to identify the types of *structural* oppression that result in Black *children – boys and girls* – markedly underachieving in school (Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010). Additionally, Rezai-Rashti and Martino (2010) argue that failure to see the role model approach through an intersectional frame can contribute "to an idealization of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity…with implications for reinforcing homophobic, sexist, and misogynist pedagogical relations in schools" (p. 40).

The divergence among intersectional and CRT scholars around Black male educational initiatives is exemplified when examining how each school of thought interprets the efficacy of the aforementioned My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative championed by the Obama administration. Warren, et al. (2016) favorably viewed the policy as an opportunity to support schools that could produce positive academic outcomes for Black boys. Dumas and Nelson (2016), on the other hand, critique the MBK initiative because very little of its funding went towards research and programming for Black girls/girls of color, despite data demonstrating that these girls are academically outdistanced by, and significantly overdisciplined compared to, their white counterparts.

Additionally, Dumas and Nelson (2016) question the research on Black males because it focuses predominantly on adolescent and young adult Black males. They warn that the resulting discourse around developing adolescent boys into men can take on patriarchal characteristics of Black masculinity that reinforce the power relationships between Black girls/women and *all* men, including Black men (Dumas & Nelson, 2016).

Continuing to critique the problematic nature of more current research on the education of Black males, V.L. Willams (2004) offers an intersectional critique of single-sex educational spaces for Black boys based on a number of factors. She argues against the erasure of Black girls

when conceptualizing solutions to systemic educational failures responsible for Black children's academic underachievement. Williams (2004) refutes the perception that black girls are doing fine, arguing that such a view ignores documented academic and perceived behavioral challenges facing Black students overall that include Black girls. Williams (2004) opposes models that seek to solve the problem of educational underachievement of African Americans by focusing on teaching Black boys to be men, viewing that approach as inherently patriarchal. She contests the framing of all-boys schools in this manner as reinforcing racist and sexist tropes about Black women as deviant and the matriarchal female-headed household as pathological (V. L. Williams, 2004). Moreover, Williams (2004) rejects the single-sex academy model for Black boys as being grounded in the long-since discredited deficit notion that Black boys raised in single-mother households are hindered in their development toward manhood. To the contrary, she asserts that emphasizing traditional male behaviors in these academies recreates and reinforces hegemonic masculinity that is limiting to the development of fully realized Black boys. Finally, Williams (2004) argues that privileging Black boys and subordinating Black girls in pursuit of liberation replicates patriarchy as it exists in the dominant culture. She contends that sex segregation viewed through race, gender, and class-based cross-interrogations "emerges as a means of supporting patriarchy and white supremacy" (Williams, 2004, p.78).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP) may provide a mediating framework that figures significantly into addressing that problem as it seeks to embrace the pluralistic and expansive identities of Black (and Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, and Pacific Islander) youth (Paris & Alim, 2014). CSP was borne of a loving critique of its predecessor constructs of Culturally Relevant Pedagogies, coined by Ladson-Billings, and Culturally Responsive Teaching and

Learning, created by Geneva Gay. CSP addresses these frameworks' resistance to adapting to the changing and evolving complexities of languages, literacies, and cultural practices of these youth and their communities (Paris, 2012). CSP returns the discussion around the education of Black boys to pedagogy and the linguistic, literate, and cultural practices that define teaching and learning in U.S. schools and the classrooms these boys and other students of color occupy. CSP operates from the premise (and promise) that this pluralism is essential to transformative schooling that privileges Black boys and girls and Latinx, Indigenous American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander American boys and girls, as well as those from other newcomer communities (Paris & Alim, 2017). CSP represents a critical stance against inequitable and hegemonic school practices enacted within dominant culture educational norms.

Critiques of well-intentioned single-sex educational spaces created to insulate and protect Black boys from the harms of structural oppression and dehumanization inherent in anti-Black racism, assert that these schools and programs nonetheless fall victim to reproducing a hegemonic, patriarchal, misogynist, and homophobic masculinity normative to that same dominant culture (Brockenbrough, 2012; Odih, 2002; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010). I extend CSP's focus on pluralist identities to masculinities (and femininities) existing on a continuum that represents an expansive, delimited notion of what it means for boys to become men (and girls to become women) while supporting the native connections between CRT and culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies.

Conclusion

Schools in the United States have failed to live up to their mission to effectively educate Black boys. Academic, social and economic indicators all reflect how Black male students are

severely underserved in schools and classrooms across the country (Harper & and Associates, 2014; Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Schott Foundation, 2015).

This has prompted various scholars to explore the academic underachievement of Black boys in K-12 education to understand the reasons for these harmful outcomes as well as identify viable solutions to the crisis of Black male educational achievement (J. F. L. Jackson & Moore III, 2006; Mitchell & Stewart, 2013; P. Noguera, 2008; Terry et al., 2014).

This study is a continuation of the response to persistent failures of U.S. schools effectively educate to Black boys. By exploring the policy discourse on how single-sex schools deliver a sound educational intervention (Goodkind, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2008; V. L. Williams, 2004), the study intends to mediate tensions surrounding well-meaning, predominantly Black adult male proposals to address the educational crisis facing Black boys–gender segregation, mentoring, and role modeling–aimed at addressing their needs within validating and affirming educational spaces designed expressly for them (Mitchell & Stewart, 2013; Quigley & Mitchell, 2018; Terry et al., 2014).

The study will interrogate how two Black women educators leading an all-male school and program, respectively, designed to advantage Black adolescent boys may proffer a nuanced response to what some scholars have identified in Black male interventions as reductionist and fraught as oppressive and authoritarian (Brockenbrough, 2012; Odih, 2002; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Woodson & Pabon, 2016).

Shall a focus on effectively educating Black boys necessarily entail an erasure of Black women or can these women be an essential part of the answer to how we can change educational outcomes for Black boys? I posit that the notion of historical Black excellence is a useful socio-historical frame for connecting–through the spirit of Sankofa–the important legacy of Black

women educational leaders a century ago to Black men designing educational spaces promoting Black boys' educational achievement today (Muhammad, 2020; Murtadha & Watts, 2005). My study applies the constructs of Critical Race Theory, Intersectional Feminist Theory, and the theory and practice of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies to frame an examination of the work of Black women school leaders' enactment of role model and mentor identities within all-male educational spaces to benefit Black boys.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

One response to the educational achievement malady facing Black boys in the U.S. has been a focus on creating single-sex educational spaces to address the specific needs of Black boys being failed by traditional schooling (Billger, 2009; Goodkind, 2013; Terry et al., 2014). A common supposition guiding this response is the need to have Black males leading Black boys, yet my critical case study aimed to interrogate this entrenched belief by centering the approaches, experiences, and impact of two Black women who have led all-boys educational spaces that serve large numbers of Black male students, thereby adding to the scholarly research on how and why women can successfully lead these programs at the secondary level and improve the educational outcomes and life trajectories for adolescent Black males.

Through the utilization of the humanizing and liberating foundations of my conceptual framework outlined in Chapter Two, this case study examined the experiences of Black women who lead all-boys of color secondary schools and programs, specifically unearthing their identities as role models for, and mentors to, the Black boys enrolled at their schools. It also explored the perspectives of seven Black male students who graduated from the single-sex schools or programs, as well as two parents, to assess the impact of the Black women leaders as role models and mentors for the young Black men.

Using qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, observations, and document review, my study built upon the extant yet scant research on this topic. These research questions guided my study:

1. In what ways do Black women school leaders enact role model and mentor identities when interacting with Black boys in all-boys-of-color secondary schools and/or programs?
    a. What aspects of the role model and/or mentor relationship do Black women school leaders value as important to the educational success of Black boys in all-boys of color secondary schools/programs?
2. How do Black males, who graduated from all-male secondary schools and/or programs headed by Black women, perceive the impact of the women as mentors and role models?
3. How and what do parents of these former Black students view as either the benefits and/or shortcomings of Black women leading these single-sex, all-male school spaces specifically designed to foster the academic success and social-emotional well-being of their male children.

Research Design and Rationale

My study employed a qualitative case study research design, which was ideal for my examination of the embedded assumptions that undergird single-sex school models intended as educational counter spaces for Black boys. In-depth case studies of women leading the all-boys school models produce emerging themes and patterns within constructivist, meaning-making inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The critical case study design not only encouraged study participants to examine, understand, and construct their reality in the particular social context(s)

in which they live and work, but to also develop emancipatory knowledge that disrupts the existing social context to change their situations (Merriam & Grenier, 2019) – in this instance, Black women educational leaders who mentored and served as roles for their Black male students in single-sex all-male school contexts.

While a quantitative design could generate cumulative data on the attitudinal dispositions of a broader population of school leaders, the limited subject sample does not allow for optimal data collection using such methods. Additionally, a quantitative approach would have been unable to adequately capture the nuance and subtlety at the essence of human perceptions of leader identity and efficacy in the way that a qualitative approach was ideally suited.

Methods

Cases

This multiple case study examines the work of two Black women school leaders, Dr. Tanisha Williams and Dr. Traci Douglas (pseudonyms), who occupied the rare roles of heading an all-boys of color secondary school and program, respectively, in urban school environments in California and the role modeling and mentoring identities they enacted to benefit their Black male students. Each of these cases examined the women's mentoring and role-modeling beliefs, behaviors, and actions during specific one to t**hree**-year periods in which the women were teachers and deans, and one (Douglas) became an assistant principal. The experiences of the women during these times occurred 11-14 years in the past. Hence, I relied exclusively on their first-hand accounts based on their memories of that period and the recollections of seven former students under the women's leadership and two former parents of one of the students during that time.

Site and Program Selection

Site selection was significant because few sites offer single-sex educational programs for Black boys led by Black women. My research project included two different sites, both in a large urban expanse in California. The first was an all-boys of-color private Catholic high school. The school, run by the local archdiocese, is still in operation, with a current demographic breakdown of 67% Latinx and 28% African American students. The second site was a magnet school in the greater Los Angeles area that used to host a now-defunct all-boys educational program. At the time that the students were enrolled, the school's demographics reflected 1,564 students, 53% of whom were Latinx, 45% were African American, and 82% were socioeconomically disadvantaged. I selected both sites because they have the appropriate population size, demographics, and gender makeup for my investigative focus on relationships between school leaders and Black male students.

I was able to conduct observations at the Catholic high school as schools cautiously returned to in-person instruction. Through these visits, I gathered valuable observational data and documents to review. The site was relevant but not central to my study. I focused my study on the leaders and leadership behaviors relative to the experiences of their past students who were no longer enrolled, and thus, their recruitment was central to my data collection and analysis.

Recruitment and Access

School Leaders

The two women school leaders central to this study were referred to me by current and former colleagues. When I reached out to the school leaders (Appendix F), they expressed interest in participation because each had the unique experience of leading all-boys of color schools or programs, and they knew of no instances in which their experiences were honored by

research. Both school leaders were attracted to the idea of examining their ability to mentor and serve as role models for the Black boys at their respective school sites. Further piquing their interest and connection with this researcher was my experience of having solely Black women educational role models and/or mentors on my professional journey from teacher to principal to principal supervisor, and program director reporting to the local district superintendent.

Former Students

After securing the leaders' participation and ensuring their and their former students' confidentiality before, during, and after the study, I enlisted their assistance in recruiting former students. The women leaders facilitated access to adult former students by providing referrals to Black males who graduated from their school or participated in their program.

Former Black male students of both leaders comprised the study participants. I recruited five former students of one of the Black women school leaders and two of the other leader based on the following factors:

1. achieving as desirable a number as possible to conduct focus groups (four minimum);
2. creating the possibility for rich and diverse perspectives from the students; and
3. attempting to compensate for the small sample represented in having just two school leaders.

Recruitment was driven by the relationships the two women maintained with their former students. Both women identified relationships as essential to enacting their continued mentor and role model identities. The Black women school leaders also cited students' willingness to participate as evidence of their impact on their former students.

I recruited former student study participants through invitations via email (Appendix G), telephone, and text message. While I was interested in the broader impact of these school leaders on boys of color in single-sex educational spaces, this study also identified Black males who were enrolled in the all-boys school or program headed by either of the Black women leaders as participants. Forty-dollar cash incentives (and/or gift cards of an equivalent dollar value) were provided to the former students taking part in the study.

Sample Population

The sample population consisted of:

- One Black woman school leader who served in the position of dean and assistant principal and is now principal at a private Catholic all-boys of color high school.
- One Black woman school leader who led a now-defunct all-boys program within a coeducational magnet high school and currently supports principals to improve academic outcomes and social-emotional health and wellness of Black students in a mid-sized public high school and an elementary school.
- Seven former students of the women (five of one leader, and two of the other) who experienced their leadership within the all-boys educational spaces. This population ensured frequent interactions between these students and the school leaders, an essential aspect of the study in terms of framing role modeling and/or mentoring and the impact of each on educational success (Gordon et al., 2010).
- Two parents of one of the former students at the Catholic high school.

Table 1 – Study Participants

Participants	Age Range	School	Position(s) Then / Occupation Now

Dr. Williams	44-46	Miller Magnet HS	Teacher, Dean, Coordinator / Principal and Administrative Coordinator
Dr. Douglas	42-46	St. Aloysius HS	Teacher, Dean, Asst. Principal / Principal
Antoine	32-34	Miller Magnet HS	Student / Minister, Aspiring Teacher
Bobby	32-34	St. Aloysius HS	Student / Senior Analytics Manager
Damien	32-34	St. Aloysius HS	Student / Scholar
Keith	32-34	St. Aloysius HS	Student / Data Analyst
Khalil	29-31	Miller Magnet HS	Student / Intervention Specialist
Rashad	30-32	St. Aloysius HS	Student / Software Programmer
Sebastian	32-34	St. Aloysius HS	Student / Finance
Marva	N/A	St. Aloysius HS	Parent / High School Business Office Manager
Terrence	N/A	St. Aloysius HS	Parent / Scheduler Automotive Services

Data Collection

Data Collection During the Pandemic

Given school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I approached interviews, focus groups, and observations using an optimal versus contingency arrangement. Optimally, data collection would have been best conducted through interviews, observations, and focus groups at the actual school site in which the work of the school leaders occurred. Doing so would have honored and heightened memory as a powerful narrative tool in the reconstruction of past events and making sense of one's present (Sharpe, 2016). This would have increased the credibility and trustworthiness of my data, given that it was based in large measure on the study participants' past experiences. Under this optimal plan, remote tools like Zoom videoconferencing were to be

leveraged to conduct interviews only in situations where schedules conflicted, or study participants were no longer living in the greater Los Angeles area.

Because of the pandemic, however, stay-at-home orders were still in place, with schools operating under full or partial closure during much of my data collection phase. Given that reality, I conducted almost all interviews remotely, using the Zoom video conferencing platform. The exceptions were my observations of the school leaders in their respective schools and offices at the time they were conducted, which happened after schools were reopened to in-person instruction, and during the times I conducted environmental scans. I was fortunate to be able to hold additional in-person interviews and conversations with the participants as a benefit of the in-person observations on-site. Focus groups were conducted remotely through the Zoom platform as well.

Interviews and focus groups were recorded using the Zoom video conferencing platform, utilizing the application's internal recording feature to archive each session. I recorded backups with a digital audio recording device, as well as an iPhone. The digital audio device provided parallel recording to ensure optimal audio capture for transcription. Observations, on the other hand, were conducted in person and recorded using a digital audio recorder with a backup recording from an iPhone. Notetaking was conducted concurrently during all audio and/or video recordings of interviews, focus groups, and observations.

Research Questions 1 and 1a

Data collection for research questions 1 and 1a was conducted through interviews of the school leaders, observations of each in their leadership positions, and document review. Because same-sex role model and mentor constructs undergird most all-boys-of-color secondary schools and/or programs, few Black women sit in positions of leadership where they can serve as

mentors and/or role models to the boys. Semi-structured interview questions allowed me to guide responses toward my research objectives while also granting the subjects the opportunity to think critically and expand on responses about their ways of being and doing mentoring and role modeling in an open-ended manner.

Interviews of the two school leaders were conducted for two hours per leader, resulting in four hours of interview data collected. Interviews of the research participants focused on: their backgrounds and their insights about the job selection process given the rarity of Black women leaders in all-male schools and programs; the impact of relational aspects of leadership on Black boys; how the participants enacted mentoring and role modeling identities (intentionally or unintentionally); and how they assessed the impact of their mentoring and role modeling behaviors on their Black male students and their parents (See Appendix A).

Observations were conducted during a week in different environments within the schools where the Black women leaders worked. I observed the schools' entrances, the main offices, hallways and breezeways, and each woman's office. The environmental scans revealed insights into each principal's leadership ways to validate or invalidate their (and their former students') recollections about their experiences in the all-boys of color school or program.

Document reviews (Appendix E) sought to unearth how the school leaders' role model and mentor identities might have been expressed in written form, including insights into any internal and external correspondence, programming, branding, and outreach within and outside each school community. The documents included the staff newsletter, the school website, and school flyers.

Research Question 2

To answer research question two, data from former students who were enrolled and have graduated from the all-boys school or program was collected through interviews and focus groups. I conducted individual interviews with former student participants remotely via Zoom video conferencing after I interviewed the female school leaders who worked with the students. As noted above, the pandemic and the fact that a few former students resided outside of California necessitated virtual interviews. Interviews with the former students took place in a single session with each participant over a one-month span, The interviews were limited to between 90 and 120 minutes each to mitigate interviewee fatigue. The resulting interviews resulted in a total of 11 hours of total interview data from the former student participants. Each interview followed a protocol that addressed multiple foci, including the experience of being a student in an all-boys of color school or program; thoughts on having a Black woman as leader of their all-boys school/program; and perceptions of the women leaders' mentoring and role modeling identities (Appendix B).

Focus groups provided the former students of one of the school leaders an opportunity to share their insights about the school leader within a group dynamic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I was able to conduct one focus group of 5 boys of one school leader, yet due to recruitment challenges, I was unable to conduct a sufficiently sized focus group for the other school leader I planned to combine the former students of each school leaders to comprise one focus group. After interviewing the young men, I decided to forgo this contingency, recognizing that the experiences of the former students, while related, were specific to each of the women, thereby making a common focus group problematic, as it might complicate or even water down insights to be gleaned from their responses. I conducted the second focus group with just the two former students. Focus group question protocols were developed to allow for extended responses that

both honor the former students' collective student voice and their individual insights (Appendix C).

Research Question 3

Recruitment of parents of former students was a challenge, so I was only able to secure the participation of two parents of one former student of the Catholic high school. While I would have liked to gather more data to address research question 3, the interview with the two parents (see Appendix D) provided insight that complemented and confirmed many of the themes that developed from the interviews and focus groups with the former students.

Data Analysis

Once data had been collected through interviews, observations, and focus groups, I identified specific mentor and role model typologies, characterized as:

- Principal Leader
- Executive
- Expert
- Disciplinarian
- Coach
- Counselor
- Community Leader
- "ethic of care"

I created notes and wrote memos to help frame preliminary categories, relationships, and themes, as well as identify leadership behaviors aligned with the above typologies when analyzing the data. Initial analysis of the recorded interviews and focus groups took place by listening before transcription. The audio recordings were later transcribed using Rev.com, and I

reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy. The collected interview and focus group data was then coded according to categories, relationships, and themes aligned with my research questions using Dedoose software.

With school facilities partially reopening, observations provided an opportunity to calibrate Black women school leaders' behaviors with their professed beliefs about how they embodied the typologies. Creswell and Creswell (2018) characterize qualitative observation as "taking field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site" (p.186). I observed each school leader for a half-day, focusing on interactions with Black male students and colleagues and, in turn, the perceived responses of the students and colleagues. The field notes recorded during these observations also provided data for comparing each woman's impact on former students in a mentor/role model capacity. Observation recordings were not transcribed, as they were used to support observation notes to validate and verify accuracy.

I reviewed historical documents of one of the school leaders to provide differential data based on the analysis categories, revealing aspects of her leadership primarily aligned with mentorship behaviors. The document review also identified elements of role model identity. For instance, the analysis of textual artifacts, i.e., the school website and archives of the principal's weekly newsletter to the school community, proved insightful as these texts were designed to deliver guidance, assistance, and motivation to students and may contain mentoring language. I analyzed other communications that focused on the school leader's qualifications (e.g., biographical sketch, additional adjunct teaching roles, and responsibilities in higher education) and celebrated her accomplishments like advanced degree attainment and professional awards.

Management of My Role/Positionality

When I conceived my research project, I was a principal, work that the Black women leaders at the center of my study have also lived and loved. This implied a shared experience between me and the participants, especially since one of them was a colleague in the same subdistrict. Subsequently, I became a principal supervisor, though I did not supervise either study participant. Since my position may have influenced the study participants' interactions with me, I first and foremost reinforced my role as a UCLA researcher. Additionally, I invoked my former position as a principal to emphasize commonalities among us and to mitigate the influence of my professional role on participant responses at the time of data collection.

Conducting a study focusing on the roles of women leaders and their impact on Black boys could have been fraught with mistrust by women leaders because of male dominance in education leadership in general and in single-sex educational spaces for boys in particular. A study that utilized an intersectional feminist analytic framework could also have been viewed as work that should be conducted by a female scholar. In acknowledging these potentialities, I took great care to recognize my positionality as a Black man studying Black women's interactions with Black boys. I honored the expertise of the Black women school leaders as research participants who have engaged in very rare work in terms of *their* positionality in all-boys educational spaces. While we may share multiple identities of race, class, education level, and professional career, I cannot fully comprehend the experience of knowing, being, doing, and becoming these identities as a Black middle-class, educated woman school leader. Therefore, I interrogated my biases and the subjectivities inherent in my study as I engaged them in my role as a researcher and a learner.

Drawing from Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) insider/outsider binary in analyzing the researcher-participant relationship, I also acknowledged my insider and outsider identities. In the

context of school leadership, I shared roles with the study participants. Like them, I had been a principal in a school serving Black and Brown students, as well as having to navigate the educational landscape as a Black school administrator. However, I was never a high school principal. Hence, I took on an outsider role in the context of high school leadership with students aged 15-18 years old.

This acknowledgment required that I address my reflexivity as a researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My professional experience of being mentored only by Black women was integral to my chosen research topic. It was also essential in shaping the practical and theoretical rationale behind my desire to eliminate the erasure of Black women from the leadership of single-sex educational spaces benefitting Black boys.

Merriam (2016) posits that critical researchers accentuate reflexivity due to the power relations innate to conducting research. Placing my study participants on similarly equal footing as my own mentors' elevated standing must be considered in terms of my relationship to the research, especially imbuing the study participants with status because I view them as occupying the same hallowed space as those who guided and advised me. Moreover, I was conscious of the power relationships between myself and the participants, especially the power afforded me by the very same structural system – responsible for the exclusion of Black women school leaders in single-sex educational spaces for Black boys. To this point, I was positioned as an outsider as well since I have never had to perform the principalship as a woman, or for that matter, live the dual axis that is being both Black and a woman.

Finally, I was aware that by being perceived as a "successful" Black male educator, my very presence may have reinforced patriarchal role model constructs among the former students who participated in my study, possibly undermining, even slightly, the perception of Black

women school leaders as role models by their former students. Thus, emphasizing my role as a researcher to the former students was vitally important, too.

Ethical Considerations

I ensured that participants were familiar with all aspects of the research study, including the research objectives and focus, the research questions, and the data collection process. Transcriptions of recorded discussions and written interpretations of participants' ideas were shared with participants periodically throughout the study.

Protecting the anonymity of the participants was a foremost concern of my study. The sensitive nature of the study—challenging male-dominant norms of educational leadership and, especially, all-boys of color educational spaces serving Black males—may produce insights that question male leadership at a foundational level. Because the school leaders were both currently working administrators, it was imperative to protect their identities to shield them from a possible lowering of the glass ceiling and professional retaliation.

To guarantee data security, I used a password-protected physical solid-state drive (SSD) and password-protected virtual (cloud) storage systems–iCloud and Google Drive–as backups. Audio recordings were stored in the same password-protected manner, with raw audio files also maintained on the audio recording device.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

To maintain a credible study and ensure my own credible research behaviors and actions, I first had to acknowledge my aforementioned biases. I engaged in this research study fully aware that I was acting on a bias of privileging women. Through this study, I intended to promote women's agency and resist patriarchal and gendered structural norms that relegate women and inhibit their full actualization in society. Through my contribution to the research on

single-sex educational spaces for Black males, I hope to ensure Black women's full, unobstructed participation in all of society's institutions and, specifically, American schooling in resistance to their marginalization and erasure.

I also acknowledge the fervent efforts of Black men in educational and community leadership positions to seek solutions to the crisis facing Black boys in America's schools. Moreover, I draw parallels between these men's efforts and the historical excellence embodied by Black women educators who, a century ago, created learning opportunities for Black girls. I thereby centered Black women as unacknowledged models for their modern-day male counterparts. This required a commitment to objective analysis of data and acceptance of findings that opposed my biases.

Examining the experiences of the students of these Black women leaders through interviews and focus groups, along with data from observations and document review, was instrumental in triangulating sources to foster credibility. Member checks provided an additional safeguard against misinterpreting participants' thoughts, ideas, and experiences by allowing them to validate my preliminary analysis of interview, focus group, and observation data as adequately capturing their perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Summary

This study used a critical case study research design to examine how Black women leaders of all-boys secondary schools and programs enacted mentoring and role model identities with their Black male students. Critical to the study were the perceptions of the Black women school leaders about how they embodied role modeling and mentoring behaviors. The experiences of a sample of their former students and two parents of a former student also provided data vital to the study. The study was designed to reveal deep, critical insights into the

Black women school leaders' ways of being, knowing, and doing while interrogating the embedded assumptions that undergird single-sex educational spaces serving Black boys. Ultimately, I hoped to support such school models to adopt expansive leadership philosophies to increase Black women's roles in enhancing academic achievement outcomes for Black males in American schools.

CHAPTER 4 - QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Introduction

Black women have embraced educational leadership roles and responsibilities in the United States, both formally and informally, for as long as Black folks have inhabited this land. Even when it was illegal for Black people to learn to read and write, courageous Black "teachers," many of them women, shared the beauty of literacy in secret and under candlelight, teaching their fellow folks in bondage to read. The pursuit of literacy, often at the risk of violent punishment and even death, has been an enduring hallmark of the Black liberation struggle in the U.S. After the emancipation of enslaved Blacks, the desire to learn to read and write became a critical pursuit (Warren, 2005). Nineteenth-century literacy societies were birthed, first by Black men and then Black women, with the tacit understanding that critical literacy skills were of immense value in a society in which literacy, or the lack of it, was used to subjugate Black Americans by, for instance, denying the right to vote (Muhammad, 2019). Of course, during this same period, Black women were important school leaders, founding schools that contributed to the movement of racial uplift through education (McCluskey, 2014).

Dr. Traci Douglas and Dr. Tanisha Williams represent this tradition of Black women in educational leadership. However, they occupy rare spaces of leading a school and a program, respectively, within single-sex environments educating Black male high school students.

Through their work, Williams and Douglas created school leadership models that both embrace and eschew the norms of traditional institutions. Specifically, these women betray the long-held assumption that Black men should lead single-sex schools and programs serving Black boys. In doing so, they provide a prospective path forward for Black women who lead schools dedicated to the educational uplift and humanizing embrace of adolescent Black boys.

Using an expansive sense of "leaders" is integral to my study of the impact of Douglas and Williams primarily on the Black boys in their high schools and secondarily the boys' parents. Each was a *teacher leader* first, remaking classrooms in their own image and that of their students. Interestingly, both led important school programs as teachers – Williams with the Male Academy and Douglas as a student government sponsor. They each transitioned into dean roles that allowed them to develop their leadership ways of being, knowing, doing, and becoming. It was as teacher leaders first and, subsequently, as deans that their leadership impact was reflected by the student and parent participants in my study. Each continued into school administration as assistant principal and then principal, but none of the former students firmly remembered experiencing the women in these particular leadership roles when they were students. Nonetheless, an expansive view of leadership that considers characteristics and actions just as much as titles, is a cornerstone of my analysis and findings.

In this chapter, I present findings from my study guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways do Black women school leaders enact role model and mentor identities when interacting with Black boys in all-boys-of-color secondary schools and/or programs?

1a. What aspects of the role model and/or mentor relationship do Black women school leaders value as important to the educational success of Black boys in all-boys-of-color secondary schools/programs?

2. How do Black males, who graduated from all-male secondary schools and/or programs headed by Black women, perceive the impact of the women as mentors and role models?
3. How and what do parents of these former Black students view as either the benefits and/or shortcomings of Black women leading these single-sex, all-male school spaces specifically designed to foster the academic success and social-emotional well-being of their male children?

Findings

The findings from this case study are organized around my research questions and presented in the sequence of the questions, yet readers will notice an interconnection between the findings. Nine findings will be presented through a thematic lens, with major throughlines about the impact and efficacy of Black women leaders serving Black male high school students. The findings revolve around the broad themes of developing authentic relationships, the intentionality of creating organic spaces for trusting relationships to develop, and the importance of holding high expectations and providing positive encouragement. The finding themes are:

1. Prioritizing Relationships Through Authenticity and Servant Leadership
2. Creating Intentional and Organic Soft Spaces that Nurture Relationships
3. Setting Realistic and High Academic and Professional Expectations
4. Mentoring by Accentuating the Positive and Encouraging Excellence

5. Promoting Academic Success
6. Embodying a Humanizing Ethic of Care
7. Cultivating Young Leaders' Personal Integrity
8. Nurturing Aspirations Through Personal Example and Practical Step-Taking
9. Embodying Motherhood Leadership

The findings respond to my research questions as follows:

Research Questions 1 and 1a - Enactment of Role Model and Mentor Identities and Valued Aspects of Role Modeling and Mentoring Relationships

1. Prioritizing Relationships Through Authenticity and Servant Leadership
2. Creating Intentional and Organic Soft Spaces that Nurture Relationships
3. Setting Realistic and High Academic and Professional Expectations
4. Mentoring by Accentuating the Positive and Encouraging Excellence

Research Question 2 and 3 - Impact of Black Women Leaders from the Perspectives of Young Black Men and Their Parents

5. Promoting Academic Success
6. Embodying a Humanizing Ethic of Care
7. Cultivating Young Leaders' Personal Integrity
8. Nurturing Aspirations Through Personal Example and Practical Step-Taking
9. Embodying Motherhood Leadership

Enactment of Role Model and Mentor Identities and Valued Aspects of Role Modeling and Mentoring Relationships (Research Questions 1 and 1a)

These Black women present an alternative to the default perspective that Black men should lead single-sex schools or school programs for Black male students. They are living

examples that Black women can and should embrace role model and mentor responsibilities as school leaders exclusively serving Black males, specifically when there is a shortage of Black males in education serving in teaching and leadership.

Finding One: Prioritizing Relationships Through Authenticity and Servant Leadership

> Feelings of worth can flourish only in an atmosphere where individual differences are appreciated, mistakes are tolerated, communication is open, and rules are flexible - the kind of atmosphere that is found in a nurturing family. (Satir, 1988, 38)

This finding recognizes the development of kinship between the school leaders and the Black male students they served. It is distinguished by relationships that are at once familial and rigorously loving in a genuine way. The Black women leaders expressed this authenticity most clearly in how they described their approach. Three sub-findings support this finding: Connecting with Authenticity, Leading from the Heart, and Grounding Relationships in Servant Leadership.

Connecting with Authenticity. A mainstay for being viewed as a role model and mentor to their Black students and the essential relationships that Douglas and Williams established and maintained with their students and families was the development of authentic connections. Notably, each woman was still actively bonded with some of the students that were interviewed for this research study even though they were six years or more removed from working with the young men in the school setting. They embodied the idea that I coined, and that guided a core belief in my pursuit of powerful school leadership: *teacher (or dean, assistant principal, principal) for a year, a friend for a lifetime.*

The women were devoted to creating truly soulful and personal (as opposed to bureaucratically conceived) learning spaces. Traditional educational leadership programs are

often viewed as effective because they focus more on technical aspects of leadership like school finance, organizational theory, leadership styles, and policy and advocacy matters, yet they fail to imbue prospective school leaders with critical habits of mind *and heart* identified by Williams and Douglas and elaborated on by their former students who participated in my study (Khalifa et al., 2018; Lopez, 2003). Douglas framed this in the context of distinguishing between herself and her predecessor at St. Aloysius High School who was an "upholder of policy, not (an) upholder of student relationships." Douglas continued,

> And so, I didn't think that me being a female would be an obstacle to discipline. That actually helped me out, and just really changed the way discipline was understood and received at St. Aloysius, (and) had teachers focusing more on relationships than the actual policy itself.

By establishing a relational foundation for her leadership approach, Douglas was able to redirect the school culture away from discipline and towards connection while still ensuring a safe and orderly campus to support the educational mission of the school.

Williams also shared the idea of relationship building as the essential aspect of her leadership style when guiding the single-sex Gentlemen Scholars Male Academy program at Miller Magnet High School. She elaborated:

> When I say building relationships and connection, it was literally lunches, visiting (their) other classrooms, connecting with their parents or grandparents. It was attending games. It was talking to outside coaches. It was identifying goals that they had… And so I used that relationship, goal setting. To what do you aspire? I had a young man one time who came from a family of doctors. Day one he said, 'I'm going to be a DJ.' I was like, 'For real?' He was like, 'Yeah.' I said, 'Oh, okay.' And music was always a big part of my

> class. So I was like, 'Cool. You're going to be my first class DJ,' because that's something that I had.

This speaks to Williams's desire to connect with students by investing in each individual, developing a sense of their full humanity and a 360-degree view of them as a whole. Echoing Douglas' idea that relationships–not policy–should be upheld, she stated that "to me, relationships come before rules."

Leading from the Heart. Williams assigning the student the role of leading the opening morning class routines while spinning a playlist of his liking captures another layer of authenticity that guides the relationship building so important to the women. By rejecting traditional policy-driven notions of managing students and space, Douglas and Williams both symbolize the habits of heart at the core of their leadership style. Williams stated how being authentically real with students was paramount:

> Because one of the things I know for sure about black male students and male students in general is they know the real… When they know that your heart is not in it there's no respect. And you'll never get it. When they know you're just doing it to cross off the 't' and dot the 'i' ... That's why some children misbehave and act the fool in some classes and don't in others.

Knowing that adolescent young men can detect inauthenticity in adults, Williams noted that relational trust is grounded in mutual respect and compassion for one another. Douglas framed this aspect of her leadership as heart work. As evidence, she recounted how, as an act of faith, her ethic of care was not tied to the institution but to the students themselves:

> Yeah, it's interesting, you mentioned, that it wasn't textbook leadership, but basically, led from the heart if you will. And there's some things I'm doing, this framework, that is

> exactly that. I don't know that I care about St. Aloysius being successful as much as I care about each student at St. Aloysius being successful. And it's something that's deeply connected to my identity of myself. For me, it's deeply connected to my faith. I feel that I share the grace that I receive from Christ, the grace that I give, the love that I receive from Christ, the love that I hope to give.

For both women, the notion of being an authentic leader was grounded in the importance of relationship building and honoring the uniqueness of each boy they led, whether it be validating an interest of theirs or seeing them with the grace highlighted in their religious beliefs.

Douglas also identified that connection was enacted in the context of community. Specifically, her care for the students is related to a love for the community in which the school lives. She makes the point that this connection transcends gender, hinting that leadership of all-male schools requires, even beyond skills, a leadership style that is not gender specific but characterized by a love for the students, their families, and the community. She continued,

> I think what ran across me… my heart or my thoughts were that a school in the inner city needed someone that loved all aspects of the community that it was situated in. Loved the people of the community and it was through that love that I felt like I could hold the high expectations I think a principal needs to have in order to lead a school like St. Aloysius. And so, I think I question more so my own… I knew I didn't know enough, like the skills I knew I would need to learn. I knew that, but did I have the commitment to learn. Did I have the… could I say wholeheartedly that I believe that every child could succeed, that I have that moral compass? And I believe that I do. I believe that I gave… So that was moreso my decision than anything about my gender.

In this reflection, Douglas conveys a central component of her leadership approach. To connect with the boys she was leading, she needed to live out a stance of love for community and love for learning. Once the boys experienced this authenticity, they would feel safe and encouraged to pursue the high expectations she established.

Grounding Relationships in Servant Leadership. Though largely relegating textbook leadership approaches in favor of fashioning organically developed personal leadership preferences, Douglas and Williams ascribe to at least one leadership style from the leadership research canon: servant leadership. Servant Leadership emphasizes the leader putting the needs of others first to help them grow and develop (Greenleaf, 2002; Northouse, 2016). Douglas articulates her adherence to this type of leading:

> Yeah. I mean I strive to be a servant leader in every (way). So I read about servant leadership. I strive to be a better servant leader. So I think that… I believe the leading from behind allows people to accomplish things that maybe they didn't even know that they could accomplish. I think leading from behind makes you more accessible to folks in a way that… So there's that built-in relationship that has to be there.

For Douglas, servant leadership is a natural extension of her approach to authenticity, not only developing trust with those she leads but also propelling them to hope and achieve beyond their own expectations.

Williams likewise implies a desire to build relationships in support of the boys she served "and the relationships coming from the opportunity to actually be in classrooms with those boys." Both leaders cultivate the approach of existing next to, teaching alongside, and being connected to Black boys, as opposed to leading from a hierarchically elevated position. In this sense, they see teaching and learning with the students as a prerequisite to leadership. Douglas

punctuates the belief in relationships over rules and roles: '[The boys] got enough rules and policies and hard noses around them, and for four years, I can give these black boys a soft space to be themselves." With an authentic approach to relationship building, love as a foundational idea in their work, and a servant leader mindset, both women established the basis for creating a safe space for boys to feel wholly accepted and motivated to grow.

Finding Two: Creating Intentional and Organic Soft Spaces that Nurture Relationships

> We create soft spaces for ourselves to land on not because we want to avoid the hard world, but because we know too well the harsh realities of it. We create these spaces because we need time to heal, to rest, and to recharge before we go back out into the world. (Anonymous, 2021)

This quote circulated online is commonly attributed to the Founder of the #MeToo movement, Tarana Burke. It was assumed to be related to topics addressed in her memoir, *Unbound: My Story of Liberation and the Birth of the Me Too Movement,* regarding Black women and girls. Douglas and Williams believe that the idea is just as meaningful and appropriate for the Black male adolescents they have worked with. Creating intentional and organic soft spaces that nurture relationships deepens the prioritization of relationship development described in the first finding. It defines an essential aspect of my interrogation of the gender dynamics in leading single-sex academies serving Black boys. The women leaders were adamant that Black boys deserved school experiences in which robust emotional support, positive identity development, safe and loving physical spaces, academic and personal growth, and a genuine sense of community and belonging were critical components. Two sub-findings support the articulation of these soft spaces. They are Welcoming the Fullness of the Boys' Humanity into the Learning Space and Role Modeling Through Relationship Building.

Welcoming the Fullness of the Boys' Humanity into the Learning Space. Douglas and Williams seek to accomplish this as a response to how they view a world (and schools within that world) that attempt to overwhelmingly limit Black boy joy and the freedom to be. Thus, identifying a world as both hard and harsh toward young Black males requires the creation of these soft spaces to allow them grace and second chances. Williams expressed this as an alternative approach to what the boys often faced from the male teachers at Miller Magnet:

> So the male teachers perceived it as the females were babying the boys. And the male teachers were like, 'You got to man up.' This bravado, 'you got to be tough, and you can't be a chump, don't be a punk.' It was that type of terminology and discussion that was happening at multiple levels just around work ethic or habits or learning or behavior or response to them.

Williams conveyed that this attitude by many of the men at Miller Magnet was responsible for the Gentlemen Scholars Male Academy's initial struggles. According to Williams, many of the boys resented and resisted this approach, jeopardizing the program. To Williams, the boys in her program yearned for a different embodiment of support. They endured the "be tough, man up" message everywhere–within and outside the school.

Conversely, Williams' teaching and leadership viewed support as grounded in mutual respect, trust, grace, accessibility, high expectations, and non-judgment. By understanding and validating Black boys' needs, energies, and experiences, Williams said that she offers an intuited "way of knowing" role model approach. As examined earlier, this knowing was not derived from any formal leadership textbook study. It is organic and unstructured, and at times, she emphasized, even improvisational. When explaining that her approach is far less restrictive than traditional school beliefs toward Black male students, she expounded,

> How was it unstructured? I want to say it probably was just my presence though, because I was around and I was someone that students felt that they can talk with and they weren't talked to, or at, which was different. My approach really was to not mirror mama, auntie, grandmama, who were like, "and you need to, and you better, and you got to, and don't…" I was more open to just having dialogue without restriction…when I say that I didn't require them in discussion to be free of profanity or talk like you got good sense. It was just talk, just say what it is. But still having that expectation, okay. So when you know you're ready to interview or you're preparing for your college thing, you know you cannot present in that way.

The relational trust Williams established with the students reflects the relationship many parents and caregivers desire to have with their children, but often lack the know-how to develop–one where they and their children can talk about anything. She seemed to understand that this space need not be one in which the boys were told not to do this or that, but rather where they could be themselves with their own language and energy and be reminded of the need to code-switch during interactions outside of the school setting.

Similarly, Douglas contrasts her style as an alternative to the constraining expectations that society at large holds for Black men and boys:

> Healing is what I'm about. Right? I feel like outside of the blue gates, they are told, instructed, required to ignore parts of themselves. And what I hope to do is create within the blue gates, a space where they can say, 'I brought my whole self to St. Aloysius.'
>
> I get positive reinforcement for being independent, for figuring it out and will always be that soft space for them to land on. And I will always be a soft space for my sons to land on. But while I'm trying to make a strong-minded black man for this country, I got to be

> careful about where those soft spaces reside and how I help him navigate those soft spaces… But to acknowledge that there's a connection between ourselves and women and their sons that might not, if left unchecked won't prepare them for the world that they have to inhabit.

Like Williams, Douglas said that she intentionally created soft spaces for adolescent Black boys to "land on," yet she also acknowledged the delicate tension inherent in her leadership work, as she needed to balance these spaces with the realism of what awaits them post-high school.

Role Modeling Through Relationship Building. The women leaders were purposeful in structuring intersecting role modeling and mentoring experiences for their Black male students. They modeled relationship building that, while mostly passive, had an undeniable long-term role-modeling impact from the boys' perspectives that helped them to better navigate the world due to engaging with and watching the artful leaders. This intentionality also led directly to mentoring interactions that I interrogate later in my research study. Moreover, as the women moved into quasi-administrative roles within their respective schools, designing meaningful opportunities to connect with their Black male students became necessary. Douglas related one way she made this happen:

> Now I have to pursue it. There's a crew that sits outside my office right now, that's about eight kids, and I can hear everything they say at lunch. So about two months ago, they just N-word this, N-word that. And I'm like, 'What?' So I go outside and whenever I hear the N-word on campus, I tell the story of my grandmother leaving Galveston, Texas, because she was walking to the bus stop (and) a little white boy called her a nigger. So I go to Costco, get a bag of some variety. And every day I take out seven snacks, dump it on the table. And in exchange for the snacks, we talk. I talk. Sit out there for a while. We

talk. Not too long. I don't overstay my welcome and I come back in. Those opportunities now have to be crafted by me.

Without a heavy hand, Douglas described how she manufactured an opportunity to get to know the boys and use their banter to insert a teachable – and personal – moment of the impact the N-word had on her family. She continued,

> Yeah. So every opportunity at this point is structured. I decided to lead the robotics club. There's a program, summer program at SC. I decided to ask the students when I sent the email about the program, I told the students that I would help them with their essay and that I would be the one writing their letter of recommendation.

In the two examples above, Douglas talked about adeptly creating structured and unstructured opportunities to either offer a teachable moment or share her wisdom, as well as encourage the boys to expand their horizons during the summertime.

As becomes apparent when looking at the insights of her former students, Douglas seemed as if she desired to extend what was organic and natural in the classroom setting as a teacher leader to the students experiencing her formal administrative leadership as principal. Douglas modeled relationship building that retained its organic character while being wholly intentional. She elaborated:

> So I have a crew right here that sits right here, and I bring them food because that's my only touch…So I bring those snacks and I'm like, 'Hey, you guys hungry today?' And they're just like, so now you find they'll talk to me. The juniors are happy because they're seniors now. They're writing me letters about getting senior privileges and of course I'll say, 'Oh, I need to talk to you face to face.' So then they come in here. So I think that there's some opportunities. You've just got to grab them.

By providing a consistent place to meet during lunch and a consistent ear to listen and voice when asked, Douglas said that she developed a safe space for the boys to let down their guard.

Douglas and Williams both stated that they ensured their accessibility to the boys by maintaining open-door policies as teachers and administrators. Establishing the relationships in this way meant that the connection to the students did not end in June or even after graduation. Williams expounded on this approach to relationship building:

> My room was always open at lunch. My classroom was open before the start of the school day. So we could come in, check-in [for] social, emotional support. And then, for my struggling students or not, whoever wanted, I taught for free in the summer for summer reading. I gave a reading schedule, resources, access to programs, connections with previous students and other professionals.

Williams modeled accessibility and dependability for the boys, and this paid off through the longevity of the relationships developed. Douglas also chose to teach a class as principal to remain accessible to her students and to maintain the relationships that are instrumental to her leadership approach. She shared, "I used to teach at least one section, which was completely crazy, but it allowed me to make sure that at the end of the year, I had those types of relationships." Not only did the extra time put in by Douglas and Williams create relationships, but this type of indirect role modeling also impacted the boys because they experienced the care and witnessed the hard work put in by the women leaders, and as readers will see later in this chapter, the boys also tried to enact this type of role modeling in their adult lives.

Finding Three: Setting Realistic and High Academic and Professional Expectations

> Our analysis supports the conventional wisdom that teacher expectations matter. College completion rates are systematically higher for students whose teachers had higher

> expectations for them. More troublingly, we also find that white teachers, who comprise the vast majority of American educators, have far lower expectations for black students than they do for similarly situated white students. This evidence suggests that to raise student attainment, particularly among students of color, elevating teacher expectations, eliminating racial bias, and hiring a more diverse teaching force are worthy goals. (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018, para. 4)

It is well-documented that a barrier to educational attainment for Black students, in general, and Black boys, in particular, is due to low expectations for them held by teachers, administrators, and other educational staff working in schools they attend. Black boys are more likely than their white counterparts to be taught by teachers who have negative views of them and low expectations for their success (Bristol, 2015). The converse is true for the Black boys who are able to experience high school through Douglas' and Williams' teaching and leadership. The Black women leaders were uncompromising in their beliefs that the Black male students they encountered would succeed–in the classroom and in life. For these women, it was a deeply personal commitment that could, at times, mean metaphorically dragging Black boys kicking and screaming to school success if that was what was required. The women leaders' embrace of realistic and very high expectations for their Black boys was supported by two sub-findings: Role Modeling Through Intentional Storytelling and Setting High Expectations with a Future Orientation.

Role Modeling Through Intentional Storytelling. Douglas symbolizes the possibility that the Black narrative tradition might inform professional pursuits not typically shaped by that tradition. Framing the school as a work of art, one in which the school is driven by an aesthetic vision that precedes bureaucratic policy, the school embodies a story of learning with each aspect

of the school as a chapter within a larger narrative whole. Douglas created experiences for Black males within this framing. In part, she enacted her role model identity through storytelling about her professional journey in a way that resonated with the students. She recounted,

> I think what happens in our culture is more like it's almost a declaration of faith. I know where you're going. I might not know the particulars, but I know you're going to be successful. And in knowing that you're going to be successful, I'm going to be very intentional in my disclosure of certain things that I know you'll need at that next chapter. I don't know that [the boys] recognized it, but it's like, I know you're going to be… You could call me right now and say you're president and I'm not going to be surprised. I know you're destined for greatness. And so, as evidence of that, I'm going to give you these stories that I am making. I make a decision to tell the stories. I'm not just rambling.

Douglas embodies Black storytelling as a validating and affirming practice of communicating the highest expectations for her Black boys. Her stories were inspired by an enduring belief in the boys' undeniable genius and intentionally delivered to validate and affirm, honor and celebrate, and, ultimately, guide them. As one of Williams' students, who will be introduced later, succinctly put it: "Every day was a story. Every day."

Setting High Expectations with a Future Orientation. Douglas said that she modeled high expectations authentically and honestly and modeled code-switching as a practical performance without compromising her integrity. She shared,

> It's important for me that I'm honest with them and that they know I'll be honest with them so there's not this kind of she acts one way when it's just us, and then white people come in the room and now she act all different. So that there's an integrity with our relationship that doesn't change based off context…. I mean I definitely know that I've

> modeled code-switching, but when I said like I don't change, the essence of me doesn't change. Now the verbs I might use and me not dropping my g's [at the end of words ending in the morpheme /ing/] might be a little different, but what I believe in and who I am does not change based off of somebody else being in the room.

Douglas discussed how she intentionally modeled for her students how to remain their authentic selves while code-switching language and behaviors to meet the linguistic and cultural requirements of different contexts without delegitimizing or eradicating–but validating and affirming–the culture of home and community and, thus, the students themselves (LeMoine & Soto, 2017). Likewise, Williams said that she established high expectations and modeled those expectations relationally, eschewing status and hierarchy in favor of authentic community with her students:

> We were in community with one another. I made clear to them that title did not make me better than them, but that I too was a learner in relation with them. And so I spoke that very early on and because of my work ethic, because (of my) respect for you and because of my desire for you, I have high expectations for you and for me, and I'm going to show you that every single day.

Douglas' and Williams' role modeling ethos was grounded in the lofty expectations they held for both their selves and the Black male students they genuinely served and cared for, as well as in knowing that the boys would find themselves in far less supportive spaces in the future.

Finding Four: Mentoring by Accentuating the Positive and Encouraging Excellence

> There remains a growing need for evidence-based programs that promote the well-being and success of African American youth. Very few programs exist to counteract the impact of issues such as negative peer influences, random violence, feelings of isolation

> from the cultural mainstream (as cited in Beacham & McCray, 2004), and negative images in television media and music (as cited in Martin, 2008). Moreover, recent high-profile attention to racial inequities in social justice … and how these inequities impact Black boys in particular, underscores the need for programs focused on positive youth development and the promotion of psychosocial adjustment. The majority of extant prevention and intervention programs for African American youth target maladjustment and problem behaviors… (Okeke-Adeyanju et al., 2014, P. 359)

In Douglas' and Williams' estimation, mentor identities were captured in subtle and not-so-subtle actions that convey possibility–of promise, hard work, goal attainment, and the pride and joy that accompany them. Both women discussed how being a role model and mentor is expressed in ways of being excellent and *doing excellence*. Both women mentors viewed their attainment of terminal degrees as powerful models of accomplishment for former students. According to their students, the leaders also exemplified states of being that influenced the students' sense of self, something that parents of Douglas' Black boys said they were impressed by. Finding four is clarified by three sub-findings: Publicly Displaying Pride of Accomplishment, Highlighting Black Excellence in the Physical Environment, and Mentoring Through Encouragement.

Publicly Displaying Pride of Accomplishment. If a physical environment can model success**,** then Douglas' office exuded this accomplishment. Master's and doctorate degrees from local well-known universities are prominently displayed, reinforcing her being a model of academic and professional excellence. On a door in her office is a display of her post-secondary matriculation. The display featured pictures of her at commencement ceremonies. Labeled Chapter I, Chapter II, Chapter III, and Chapter (no Roman numeral is included), the images

reflect her receiving her bachelor's degree in psychology (Chapter I) and obtaining her doctorate in education (Chapter III). Filled and unfilled chapters deliver a message that life is a series of chapters written and yet unwritten. Again, she communicates her professional journey using a storytelling framing. An award for Outstanding Doctoral Alumni and Educational Leader for Social Justice adorns a bookcase and sits next to an award for partnership with a non-profit that was awarded to the school under her leadership.

A bulletin board celebrates her students' accomplishments – graduating from St. Aloysius and from university, at prom, in senior portraits, on the football and basketball teams, rocking letterman jackets. Interspersed within and among these photographs are a picture of her as an infant along with pictures of her two sons as infants and toddlers. The intentional and intimate juxtaposition of family photos with photos of Douglas' past and present students is not lost upon the observer, as it tangibly symbolizes that she views her students as part of her extended family and cares for the boys as such.

Douglas models achievement grounded in faith. A small banner featuring 1Corinthians 13:4-8 hangs on another door. Framed sheet music for the hymn *It Is Well Within My Soul* stands on the same bookcase featuring her awards behind a picture of her family–Douglas, her husband, and three sons.

Highlighting Black Excellence in the Physical Environment. Not only did Douglas and Williams underscore their personal accomplishments, but they also highlighted Black excellence within a broader, historical perspective. Having transitioned from principal to an instructional coordinator responsible for implementing a program focused on Black student achievement, Williams' workspace featured a theme of Black excellence that prominently features Black males from many generations. A print of an oil painting reimagines the last

supper. In place of Jesus and his twelve disciples, is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with twelve Black leaders from throughout history, including Thurgood Marshall, Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, W.E.B. DuBois, President Barack Obama, Muhammad Ali, Huey Newton, Frederick Douglass, and Marcus Garvey. Another print features the greatest Black comedians assembled in a barber shop. Among them are Richard Pryor, Redd Foxx, Bernie Mac, Bill Cosby, Eddie Murphy, Dave Chappelle, Katt Williams, Martin Lawrence, Mike Epps, Traci Murray, Robin Harris, and Chris Rock. Prints of portraits rendered in a faceless style feature Prince and Michael Jackson and included a couple of Black women music icons too – Aretha Franklin and Whitney Houston.

Pennants from different Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are hung in Williams' office. On multiple bookcases ready to support teachers' professional development are classroom sets of books by leading Black scholars on culturally responsive pedagogy, as well as a set of texts featuring social justice-themed high school mathematics lessons. To guide students' intellectual development is a set of deceased rapper Tupac Shakur's collection of poetry and a book of Pulitzer Prize-winning artist Kendrick Lamar's poetry.

Williams also accentuates the positive by adorning her workspace with a series of posters featuring well-known Black leaders and celebrities along with their inspirational quotes: Rosa Parks, Nelson Mandela, President Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Maya Angelou, Malcolm X, and Oprah Winfrey.

Moreover, Williams encouraged her colleagues to see students' gifts, talents, and healthy choices rather than just their challenges and shortcomings. She recounted a time when she challenged colleagues' deficit notions about their students:

> They were like, ‘Oh dang. I wouldn't even have thought about that.’ Yeah. Because we are so busy wanting to be like, ‘and they did this wrong and that wrong, this wrong and that wrong.’ But can you tell me the thing they did right?

Williams modeled her unfailing belief in the inherent promise of her students, focusing on their assets and rejecting the deficit orientation towards them held by her co-workers.

Mentoring Through Encouragement. Williams cautioned against the old school “do what I did” mentoring stance adopted by her male colleagues toward boys that is absent of the relationships and encouragement that she and Douglas view as necessary. She expanded,

> I would also say to men that just because you did it, that concept of, because I did it, you could do it too. That doesn't necessarily translate well as these generations have begun to change. It's almost like the, I said before, you give respect because you earn respect, blah, blah, blah. Like that old adage doesn't work. And so just because you did it doesn't mean that it can be done or emulated in the same way. But that relationship is the most important piece to any type of mentoring, is to be able to build a relationship. We take for granted the walk and talk. Like I said, the talking with, and not to. The removal of degrading words like you chump or you a punk, or you a sissy if you this. Those type of things don't encourage. They discourage you from even building a relationship because it shows your level of being judgmental. And in mentorship, there's really no judgment.

Williams focused on how the enactment of her mentoring identity differed from that of her male counterparts. Hers was rooted in cultivating relationships with her boys—relationships absent of judgment—to foster their development and achievement within a world already primed to judge them harmfully.

Impact of Black Women Leaders from the Perspective of Young Black Men and Their Parents (Research Questions 2 and 3)

One intention undergirding this study, beyond interrogating the women leaders' role model and mentor identities, is to "lift every voice" by elevating and amplifying the voices of those most often silenced in the educational enterprise–students and families. Key participants in my study were the young Black men who were former students of the women leaders. Their insights were critical to understanding if and how the Black women school leaders enacted role model and mentor identities in the single-sex educational spaces designed to benefit the students. They were part of a data set assembled to confirm or contradict Douglas' and Williams' appraisals of their mentor and role model selves. Five former students of Douglas were interviewed individually, as were two former students of Williams. Two focus groups were conducted with the five former students of Douglas and the two former students of Williams, responding to questions intended to jog their collective memories about their experiences with the women. Additionally, in response to the lip service often paid to parent involvement in schools without understanding parent needs and desires, removing barriers to engagement, and strengthening parent agency and empowerment (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020; M. R. Warren et al., 2009), I also interviewed the parents of one former student under Douglas' care to incorporate their insights into the impact of Douglas on their son's life.

Finding Five: Promoting Academic Success

> Most often, school leaders are guilty of offering very few options and choices. According to Hansen students often feel 'disinvited in school' due to the fact that they always feel overlooked. No one cared enough to encourage their participation in sports or other school activities; they receive papers with a grade only, lacking additional comments; and

> their absences were rarely, if ever, noticed by their teachers. Hansen further explained that 'these students suffered from a caring disability; not enough educators cared to invite them to participate in school life. (Burns & Martin, 2016, p. 34)

As far as Black male students are concerned, the most simply stated of the nine findings, Promoting Academic Success remains exceedingly difficult for most U.S. schools and school districts to attain. My study participants said that they promoted academic success daily so that it became a reality exemplified in the scholastic achievements of the Black male students. Two sub-findings support understanding how the Black women leaders promoted academic success as a normative reality for their boys: Role Modeling Through Being a Lifelong Learner and Setting High Expectations and Mentoring as a Warm Demander.

Role Modeling Through Being a Lifelong Learner and Setting High Expectations. Douglas and Williams were recognized as educational role models by each of their former students. Notably, the young men stated that the influence and enduring impact of the women on them as high school students first at St. Aloysius and Miller Magnet, and as adults in the present, reflected how the women's role model identities were observed and embraced. The students of Douglas seemed to see in her a mirror image of themselves and the possibilities for their own futures. Damien, a doctoral candidate at a university in the southeastern United States, articulated Douglas's impact on his scholarly pursuits:

> Man, I think her commitment to education is huge. She earned her doctorate well after I was gone. So, there was, I think for students coming through Aloysius and even just myself as someone who's an alumnus of the school, you see someone who has ascended, right? For me, I saw her as a biology teacher. That was my first touch point. And to see her go from that to becoming... I'm trying to remember; was she vice principal prior to

> principal? I'm forgetting the timeline but nonetheless, seeing her ascension through leadership and then her ascension through academics it's huge because you think about, for me it's like, man seeing someone who looks like you continue to push for higher achievement but then also to translate that into pouring back into the communities that she grew up in and that she serves.

Damien was clearly impacted by the example of academic pursuit in the name of community uplift set by Dr. Douglas.

This theme of educational and professional drive on display in Douglas was a throughline in her former students' reflections. Bobby shared Douglas' modeling the importance of effort and intent as a scholar as a motivating factor in his own identity as a learner:

> We're students, we're all driving to get to college. We see her putting in this work also. She's telling us about the classes at LMU, we're seeing her study, she asking us questions about X, Y, and Z. Then we see the progression to dean.

For Bobby, seeing Douglas balance her work life with classes while maintaining relationships with them gave him a sense of possibility and a model to follow in his own pursuits.

Rashad appreciated the way Douglas modeled a necessary perseverance, hustle, and grind. He emphasized,

> And if I can see that this woman, right? Ms. Douglas is able to take on all this burden and do all this stuff, who are you? I can't get off of work at five o'clock and just sit around, watching TV. I can't….I've seen Ms. Douglas in cap and gown. You understand what I'm saying? Subconsciously, that puts in me, bro, there's more to go get. You feel what I'm saying?

This reflection from Rashad shows the inspirational impact on his desire to do the same to succeed, and it underscored Dr. Douglas' authentic and motivating approach to role modeling. This was also echoed by Damien's mother, Ms. Allen, who added:

> She's a strong Black woman. From the time that we met her, she was pretty young, and just seeing how she ... while still doing a full-time job, studied to receive her doctorate. Just a strong role model for the boys to see... And I think she was even a young mother during that time, so just very, very, very strong role model for them. Just seeing what she was trying to do to better herself and her family. And I think that was important for them to see.

Douglas's role-modeling impact on the boys was evident in the reflections of the former students and their parents. Through her example, she showed how one could continually grow to improve one's life.

Antoine acknowledged Williams' Black striver bona fides and the impact that her educational attainment had on him while maintaining an authentic sense of self:

> I've seen her having to do this chess move, you get the education, you get the degree, you get the experience… this woman is very qualified. Matter of fact, she's overly qualified. And if you put the prefix of her name over there, her heart is in the right place.

Antoine respected that Williams' academic achievements and earned honorifics did not usurp her genuineness. He also voiced high expectations for intellectual growth and academic achievement, as evident in the materials that Williams required him and the other Male Academy students to read and respond to. He shared:

> She was posting up [Ta-Nehisi Coates'] literature and things like that. Her and her colleague, Miss Proctor, who… was also my 10th-grade teacher with the all-boys class.

> And they were bringing outside information, that nobody, I've never read before. I read [Chinua Achebe's] Things Fall Apart, like they brought out information, us as black boys, to be able to challenge us and mold us to become greater and better.

Antoine stressed that the academic and intellectual rigor he engaged in was a result of William's belief in his and his peers' enormous potential. Hence, her raised expectations for them matched that potential.

Mentoring as a Warm Demander. Both Douglas and Williams were viewed by the students as strict but loving warm demanders. Warm Demander theory is a teaching philosophy that emphasizes the importance of high expectations and high-quality relationships in the classroom (Kleinfeld, 1975). The approach has been effective in improving all students' academic achievement, especially those from marginalized groups. It was a core aspect of the women's mentoring stance, one rooted in an ethic of care that ensures that students feel safe, supported, and respected while being held accountable to the high expectations they set for them. The students expressed being "pushed" and "challenged" by the women. Keith stated, "we look back, and we appreciate that because we need somebody like that. You need somebody to push you." He likened Douglas' approach to striking a balance between care and accountability: "I am your friend, but I'm not your friend. I'm here to make sure that you're going to places that you need to get to as a young Black man."

Sebastian elaborated on this balance and validated Douglas' idea that she wanted to ensure that she had given the boys a soft space to land so they could first succeed academically and develop into role models themselves. He fondly remembered,

> Dr. Douglas had a weird way, like I said, of bringing people together in a way that wasn't afraid to challenge you and refresh your values, and make sure that you're a stand-up

> gentleman, but at the same time, give you enough grace and a rope, I think, to mess up, but know that it's still okay. You still can be looked at as someone who's going to be an influence or where you're crowned in the world and speak highly of.

Sebastian appreciated the push to live up to high expectations–the demand–and he took any challenges as a learning process because Dr. Douglas encouraged him to carry on–the warmth. Damien's mom reaffirmed this vital aspect of Douglas' leadership:

> And one of the things that was interesting, you would hear kids say, 'Oh, so-and-so teacher gave me a D.' She said, 'No, they didn't give you nothing. That's what you earned.' She made that very clear. Especially when she was in the class, 'No, you earned that. You need to live up to that, because that's what you earned. I don't give you anything.' She was very real, and I think parents appreciated that.

Douglas' high expectations as a warm demander able to push students and insist that they take personal responsibility were grounded in her relationships with the boys. This was also the case with Williams.

Antoine attested to William's warm, demanding way when addressing her mentorship as a motivator, encourager, and reinforcer. He attested,

> She gave us space to be able to understand. And she never stopped who she was. She was still stern. She's still on your butt. She's still on your case. She short and she a firecracker. That's what she did. Maybe because of the love that she gave us and the compassion that she gave us.

Khalil offered a vignette about the tough love and firm grace that Williams embodied. He had been kicked out of Miller Magnet High School during his freshman year for fighting. He shared that he was allowed to return to Miller solely because of Williams' advocacy on his

behalf: “Dr. Williams was basically…at that point became the most influential person in my life, that outside of my parents to basically get me back in the school, it was really her alone.” He added that she required him to secure a letter from the local county sheriff’s summer program verifying that he had completed community service as a stipulation for reentry. He also shared, “And I did all of that, just to be able to get the education I feel that I needed and wanted while at Miller… But luckily, she had seen something in me like I was saying, that she gave me a second chance…” What happened later that year cemented his relationship with Williams even further:

> I was unable to take my final because she kicked me out. I stood outside the door for about two hours, because like I said, it was the final. I sat outside, didn't move, thinking, okay, 30 minutes passed, 45 minutes, an hour. … all (are) coming out class and I'm standing there… like, ‘Ms. Williams, you really didn't let me take my final.’ She's like, ‘No, you're going to learn your lesson about when I say something.’ And ever since then, I just took every situation serious…because I know, no one has to do anything for me, especially when someone had already stuck out their neck for me.

Khalil’s immense respect for Williams is evident in his recounting of the classroom incident. Williams’ lesson in accountability tied to her firm belief in his promise and him not living into that potential has remained with him since.

Finding Six: Embodying a Humanizing Ethic of Care

> Therefore, any discussion having to do with the improvement of subordinated students’ academic standing is incomplete if it does not address those discriminatory school practices that lead to dehumanization. (Bartholome, 1994, p. 176)

Central to Douglas’s and Williams’s authentic and relational leadership styles was their insistence on seeing the boys in their schools as fully and wonderfully human. Through this

humanization, power dynamics were flattened, and relationships deepened so that the boys could reach their full potential. Readers will be introduced to three sub-findings that will contribute to understanding how the women embodied a humanizing ethic of care. These sub-findings are Relating with Accessibility, Joy, and Genuine Interest and Mentoring through Motivation, Encouragement, and Reinforcement**.**

Relating with Accessibility, Joy, and Genuine Interest. The former students affirmed Douglas's and Williams's intentions to deliver to their boys a soft, safe space in which they could realize and express their fullness. Driven by a purpose to establish deep connections with the students, the women operated from an interior belief about what school should be for their students to develop their own interior identities, absent the hierarchical notions of power that infect the relationships between adult faculty and students. Damien regarded this impact as Douglas "always trying to bring it down to Earth to us." He saw it as an individual style that began in the classroom and was just as present when she transitioned into leadership:

> So that was just a style of hers. And so I think when she moved into a leadership role, that's what she really carried over into that space. As much as she was obviously a prominent figure on our campus, I never felt distance from her. There's obviously a hierarchy that you respect, you understand. She commands respect, and she holds power in terms of what we were doing at the school. But I never felt like, personality-wise, I was distant from her. *I never felt lower than her or smaller than her (emphasis mine).*

Damien's reflection is compelling in its nuanced understanding of power and how it informs the relationship between teacher and pupil. It further emphasizes Douglas's accessible and non-judgmental approach toward the boys.

Bobby also explained it being fundamentally different than the traditional power relationships in schools, noting that, “it wasn't really a teacher-student relationship.” He characterized it in humanizing terms:

> It was more human, more... I don't want to say humane. We weren't like animals or anything like that. But case in point, there weren't a whole bunch of teachers opening their doors saying, ‘Yeah, y'all can come sit up in here, whatever, do y'all thing.’

Bobby understood that his connection to and relationship with Douglas differed from that of students and their teachers in most high schools, allowing him to comfortably and safely live into his potential under her leadership. He continued, “Like some of them will talk to us, they'll relate to us, they'll give us the real, but they're not going to also talk about themselves in a vulnerable way too.” Bobby viewed it as a two-way dynamic. “It was for sure a symbiotic relationship. Not at the time, we didn't really know, but I know she was giving us a lot of gems and she was probably learning some things from us too.” Both Damien’s and Bobby’s earnest reflections about the unique relationship that Douglas fostered with them provided a poignant glimpse into her ability to artfully connect with her students.

On a related note, Damien’s father, Mr. Allen, commented on the genuine nature of her interest in his son. He remembered,

> [She] shows an interest in the kids' all-around well-being. And that goes a long way. And the kid's like, ‘Man, my principal came in here and she shot basketball. She came in here and she took an interest. She took down stats, okay.’

While teachers and administrators are often encouraged to attend students’ extra-curricular events and get to know them outside of the classroom, many do not or cannot make that

investment, but as noted by Allen, Douglas actively showed an interest in the fullness of the boys' lives, from academics to sports to music to post-high school plans.

As further evidence of Douglas' impact, Keith recounted with excitement an example of how he hurriedly shared the news with Douglas when he received his SAT scores and college acceptance letters. He recounted,

> I just ran downstairs, and I told her immediately what [SAT] scores I got, and she was just like, 'What?' And I just remember, we just shared that moment. It was just joy and excitement, a little bit of disbelief, and all of that. I remember when I got... I think my senior year me and my friend Seb, we applied to maybe like 22 different colleges, like 40-plus scholarships and programs, and Ms. Douglas was always the first person we ran to when we got those acceptance letters.

Keith reveals the power in Douglas granting the boys her blessing to express the whole of their humanity–symbolized during their daily lunch gatherings but significantly conveyed in joyful moments like celebrating a good SAT score or being accepted to the college of one's choice. Douglas was cultivating "Black Boy Joy" before it became part of the cultural lexicon, creating meaningful occasions for the boys to resist the pressure to conform to limiting notions of masculine development–be hard, be tough, be contained–and embrace the fullness of their emotions.

Khalil expressed Williams' mentorship through her role as an advisor but one who was wholly accessible, stating that "Ms. Williams was always that person I felt like could always go to if something was wrong or she already knew, okay, something must be up with this guy today, or something." Her accessibility left a lasting impact on Khalil, especially her ability to intuit when something was bothering him that required her intervention and input. He remembered that

“she would sometimes initiate that conversation to figure out what was wrong rather than me having to do it myself. And so, since she took that initiative, it made me feel more comfortable to make me be able to do it on my own.” Khalil captures Williams’ connectedness to the boys as being akin to a sixth sense. The connective pause to notice, check in, and engage despite the busy work of being a school leader, is a by-product of the deep relationship she nurtured with him.

Mentoring through Motivation, Encouragement, and Reinforcement. A few boys identified the mentorship roles of motivator, encourager, and reinforcer in Douglas and Williams. Rashad reflected on what was identified in the observation data as the intentionality of her office as a validating space where students saw themselves affirmed and celebrated:

> I remember she used to have our pictures on her wall and her office. You know what I mean? That'll instill confidence to make a kid feel important. That stuff is big, man. A lot of these kids don't be knowing who they are. People ain't at home kissing them on their forehead. They not hugging them, man. And when you get a teacher that do those small things, man, that is huge.

Rashad underscores the magnitude of Douglas’ passive mentorship of indirectly communicating the boys’ worth and importance by imaging her workspace. Her mentoring style became a model that Rashad desired to share with those he might mentor in the future. He continued, “Ms. Douglas has always been helpful, anytime I needed her… be it advice, be it motivation, encouragement, she's always been there.” He added that “her attitude hasn't changed either, and I appreciate that. I think it's something I can learn from, to pass down as well.” For Rashad, Douglas’ consistency created rich mentoring opportunities and reinforced a strong, loving presence in his life. In turn, he anticipated modeling these traits when the time comes for him to guide and inspire others.

Antoine discussed the intensity of Williams' mentoring. He described her as passionate and tough regarding the lessons she conveyed, yet she communicated her fervor with encouragement and reassurance that reinforced the boys' acceptance.

Khalil remembered the role Williams played during a time when he was, like all youth, experimenting with identities–some healthy, others not so much–as he was growing into his authentic self. The negative influence of some of his peers was countered by Williams' positive motivational approach. He believes the encouragement was timely and necessary, firm yet caring:

> She was just so influential and just caring as well, like to just know, okay, Khalil look, you got to get your stuff together because you're not dumb, you're not ignorant, you're not like the rest of these kids around here. You have somewhere to go, you have a future ahead of yourself. So don't make silly mistakes by trying to be him, if that makes sense. So I had to really separate what I really wanted versus who I wanted to be.

Similarly, Keith likened Douglas' impact to a "subconscious support system thing where her voice was just always in the back of my head." He talked about the importance of having "somebody that knows me and believes and thinks I could do anything." He elaborated,

> So maybe I could do it. I remember we was in high school, I was running around, seeing it all the time. And I remember her encouraging me, "Hey, why don't you look into some music program or something, or why don't you learn to play piano, learn how to do all these different things related to music because you seem to love it?"

Khalil and Keith stress the women leaders' encouragement as a guiding force, providing the boys direction, validation, and motivation at a time when they both needed it.

Finding Seven: Cultivating Young Leaders' Personal Integrity

> Moreover, mentors could give voice to youth by helping them communicate their needs, wishes, and strengths. This requires that mentors humbly enter into the lives of youth as learners and collaborators, seeking to win trust and an intimate understanding of their unique needs and wishes, as well as understanding barriers in communicating them. (Liang et al., 2013, p. 262)

Much of the mentoring research literature is focused on the well-being and individual success of the mentee rather than their personal growth and development of their unique abilities, skills, and interests as factors in promoting agency and empowerment to foster social change (Liang et al., 2013b). An overwhelming theme in Williams' and Douglas' mentor behaviors is the personal impact the former students stated the women had on them. The long-term investment in each student, as framed by the women's asset-based approaches versus the deficit orientation of early mentoring programs (Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001), is important to this research study.

In the former student and parent reflections below, Douglas and Williams nobly aimed to ensure their mentees developed into honest, wholesome, polite, trustworthy, courteous, and service-minded individuals. Three sub-findings elaborate on how the women developed their Black male students' leadership traits and personal integrity: Investing in the Fullness of the Boy's Humanity and Potential, Leveraging Similar Lived Experiences to Deepen Relationships, and Mentoring with a Focus on Self-Responsibility.

Investing in the Fullness of the Boy's Humanity and Potential. Damien looks upon the investment Douglas made into each of his cohort of students as instrumental to the relationships borne from their interactions with her. He specifically found her ability to see them

as more than just students, to view in them a fullness to be further developed, as distinguishing them from what other students experienced. He recalled,

> I just think that she was really invested in me, and I think that could obviously translate to any other student. She was invested in us in so many different ways. It wasn't just we were her students. We were people that happened to be a student, but we also had other facets of us that she invested and poured into.

To Damien, viewing him first as wholly human entailed an investment from Douglas that simply being her student could not match. This humanizing aspect of her relational leadership philosophy clearly left an imprint on Damien and others based on what they shared in our conversations

From Bobby's perspective, Douglas' commitment to her students was driven in part by recognizing their academic promise as young Black achievers and wanting to ensure they succeeded not just scholastically but in life. He noted,

> So, I think there's something there around seeing smart Black men, granted, there were Hispanic students in there in the class as well, so I don't want to take anything from them. But I do think there was a vested interest from her standpoint to ensure that these Black men are continually cultivated outside of just books.

Bobby appreciated that Douglas recognized his and the other Black boys' enormous academic possibilities and focused on their human potential, which she cultivated to bloom beyond their school years.

Keith summarized the impact of Douglas' investment in him individually as foremost to his development. Consistent with his peers' beliefs that hers was an expansive view of them beyond just students, he, in turn, saw her as more than just a teacher. He revealed,

> Her investing the time and guidance into me specifically, I think it's the most important thing because it's one thing to have people generally in your vicinity saying, 'Hey, you can be successful. Go do your thing.' And then you're kind of like, 'Okay, cool.' But having somebody who cares enough to go above and beyond what she's being paid for every two weeks to make sure that you were getting tangible guidance that shows you how to go about things, being that presence that is more than a teacher.

The ability to see in one another qualities beyond the institutional norm of teacher and pupil engendered a bond that amplified Douglas's influence on Keith. This awareness that generated an enhanced sense of self for him was, according to Khalil, evident in Williams as well. Khalil reflected on Williams' mentorship and its ethic of care, lending to an intuited sense of who he was and was going to become before he was fully aware of himself. He reflected,

> Ms. Williams she knew all that about, the type of person I was, when I was trying to be with the in crowd, when I wasn't. And so it was just always that constant reminder of her telling me, okay, remember who you are, don't change who you are. People are going to respect you more if you be the person you really want to be.

Williams' devotion to impacting Khalil's way of becoming mirrored Douglas' impression of Keith, with each guided toward becoming a better version of himself.

Antoine passionately summed up the theme of relational investment and enduring loyalty and care in Williams that served as an essential aspect of each of the women's approach to mentorship. He asserted,

> That little, short black woman cared about me, and she didn't have to. She didn't have to. And so what is she to me now?... I want to make the time for her because she made the time for me. Even after I've matriculated, she's wrote letters of recommendation for me.

> She's been a spokesperson for me. She's given me a confidant. She's never changed…anybody can be a role model when a bell is rang and you got six hours to teach. But what about afterwards?

The recollections of the former students provide a profound sense of how the women developed enduring relationships with the boys and were steadfastly committed to their holistic development. Furthermore, the servant nature of the women's leadership inspired a few of the young men to serve others, too.

Additionally, Damien's parents echoed the sentiments of many of the boys, as they recounted how Douglas nurtured the potential of the boys under her care through collaboration with their parents, reminding the boys to always look forward and see their strengths. Mr. Allen shared,

> She wanted the world [for Damien], she gave him the world. She said, 'I'm going to do what I can to get you to the next level. When you get to the next level, you got to take it to the next level, because I can only go so far. Because this is where my window of life of you exists, right here.' In the four years that she had to develop him, she developed him as far as you could go. Then she has to turn the rein back over to the dad, to say, 'Dad, his next four years is on you. However, I will still be a partner in developing him even further.'

Douglas exemplified an ethic of long-term care and commitment in a world that is often filled with short-term relationships and limited or broken expectations. On the contrary, Douglas authentically–and realistically–invested in the boys for as long as she could, with the parents as key partners. Damien's mother continued, "Her leadership transcends beyond just St. Aloysius' walls. She has developed a relationship with some of these young men. And now, you were my

principal, you were my teacher, but you're my friend now. We're equals." Douglas fully humanized the boys, and in the process, she flattened the power differential in the relationship to help the boys reach their potential.

Leveraging Similar Lived Experiences to Deepen Relationships. Realness was a quality that was paramount to each of the students when identifying key characteristics that Douglas and Williams exhibited. To them, such authenticity was a requirement for the deep connections that the women established with their students. These were Black women who had lived in and experienced the same city and many of the same or similar communities and neighborhoods where the students grew up. In their students' eyes, this lent Williams and Douglas a credibility not possessed by many of the other adults in the school setting. This credibility engendered respect. Douglas and Williams *understood* the boys–who they were and were becoming and what they were experiencing.

Keith explained the importance of Douglas relating to and understanding him and his peers as a key part of her successful mentorship. He expressed,

> 'Hey, I want to make sure that these young Black and Brown men are getting what they need in all aspects in order to be successful humans, not just good college students or whatever it is,' is probably the most important part of her leadership. And I think that comes from her being a Black woman, again. You can send somebody who's educated and has a great thesis on how to run a school, but if you can't relate to the kids that you're guiding, if you don't care about them, if you don't understand them, then I don't think that works as well.

Keith recognized how Douglas' relatability and experience heightened her understanding of the boys, contributing to their mutual respect and fostering the boys' openness to her guidance.

Sebastian stated that Douglas's personal and professional experiences provided a substantive foundation for mentoring and specifically her unique mentoring style, in which she offered guidance on a number of life's challenges. He related,

> Whether it was career, let's be clear, she's achieved countless things and things that we'll jump to one day at some point. She could speak to a lot of areas in life that we were experiencing, whether it was women, family, career, goals that we wanted to achieve. She was able to speak to a lot of that stuff…that she gave us before we departed from the nest. Those little life lessons, whether it was women, or falling off the path, or going to college. Some of those things I couldn't get at the house, and same thing for my friends. The camaraderie that we had around those conversations (was unforgettable).

Sebastian talked about how he appreciated Douglas sharing so much of herself through her experiences to serve the boys' growth and development. This was the type of support he was not getting elsewhere, and he and the other boys needed it to prepare for life after high school.

Damien's parents also highlighted the importance of a school leader engendering an affinity with the culture of the school and surrounding community. Ms. Allen observed,

> I feel that Dr. Douglas was very transparent. It was particularly refreshing, because as a predominantly school of Black and Brown young men, she could definitely identify with our son. And not just Black young men, but she could identify with the Hispanic students as well, just being a woman of color.

Damien's father reiterated the importance of having a Black woman from the community leading the school: "She came from where you grew up. She could identify with your upbringing." He continued:

> The experience to me was kind of refreshing. To actually be going to a school where, first of all, as a minority already in the lead role. That's to give you something to look up, to aspire and dream towards. When you go to most schools, you'll see someone who's not of your nature, not from your background… Dr. Douglas was someone that you could identify with.

The parents spoke highly of Douglas' leadership qualities in general, but during the interview they emphasized the importance of having a school leader with who they and their son could identify with culturally and someone who was from the neighborhood. This connection deeply enhanced Douglas's ability to mentor the boys she led.

Mentoring with a Focus on Self-Responsibility. Antoine shared an example of Williams' directness and insistence on students' choice and accountability having the power to change one's life trajectory and disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline. He said that a classmate in the male academy was engaging in behaviors that led to more than one encounter with the criminal justice system. However, Williams' stern mentorship supporting the student's self-empowerment, understanding, and agency was key to his positive transformation. He suggested,

> I won't say they're a completely different person, but the growth of this person has just changed them and made them become more wiser, and different things of that sort, and gave them the understanding that, okay, if I'm going to do the things that I do, I have to move differently about it and do things a certain way, to where it's not harming myself or harming others around me. And like I said, she did that and that's one of the biggest inspirational stories I know of her to do.

In this instance, Antoine explains the life-changing possibility of Williams' influence, which, for one classmate, he was certain was the difference in ensuring the student became a productive, positive adult rather than a casualty of the carceral state.

Sebastian related a similarity in Douglas' approach, allowing students the freedom to make choices, yet developing in them a sense that their decisions had real consequences. He remembered, "It was never like don't make that decision, it was more like, hey, these are your consequences. If you decide to go this way, just FYI." Rashad reiterated Sebastian's point on freedom of choices. He said that she was "not like, 'Don't do this, or don't do that.' Just like, 'Don't get crazy.' You know what I mean? 'Have fun, but...'" Williams and Douglas both adopted mentoring stances rooted in recognizing and honoring the boys' agency while developing their understanding of – and ability to make – healthy and accountable choices.

Damien's mother also affirmed this dimension of Douglas' leadership style, as she recalled that Douglas encouraged the boys to make informed choices and take responsibility for those choices. Ms. Allen remembered Douglas saying, "Don't blame your shortcomings on the next individual. Your shortcomings are your shortcomings, own them, and you know what? Work on them. Yeah, we all know we're not perfect people." The balance of pushing the boys with grace humanized the boys, as it also promoted self-responsibility.

Finding Eight: Nurturing Aspirations Through Personal Example and Practical Step-Taking

> Relating to mentors is a crucial aspect of the success of the mentoring programme as they are able to interact with someone inspirational who comes from their background. By learning 'all about what he did when he was in our place,' they can become inspired and motivated to raise their own aspirations. (O'Sullivan et al., 2017, p. 128)

The women leaders' influence on their students' aspirations was reflected in the boys' college pursuits, which in turn shaped their future professional accomplishments. While an emphasis of this study is the personal and relational facets of Douglas's and Williams's role model and mentor behaviors toward their students, the approaches of the women were expressed by the students as fostering an aspirational mindset that transcended applying to and graduating from college, which strengthened their future professional qualifications. Moreover, the women were, at the same time, modeling for the students how they might respond to situations they would likely encounter in their own professional settings. Sub-findings that reinforced this primary finding are Mentoring to Develop College-Going Aspirations, Role Modeling Confidence and Poise While Navigating Professional Spaces, and Mentoring Through Developing Leadership Opportunities and High Expectations.

Mentoring to Develop College-Going Aspirations. Douglas's students highlighted the importance of her mentorship in preparing them for college. Beyond the instructional leadership work of ensuring their academic preparation, they also received practical advice about what to expect during their college experiences. Damian reflected on this aspect of Douglas's mentoring, providing a sense of her honest, forthright guidance about the next chapter of their lives:

> So I think folks just really admired her, her humility, her fun, but then also her realness. I think she never sugarcoated anything. She made sure that it was plain and clear for us of what was up next for us, being in college and the different challenges that we were going to face, especially those of us who were going to be leaving South Central and potentially going to places where there wasn't going to be a lot of people that looked like us in the places that we went.

To Damian, an essential aspect of Douglas's mentorship was sharing her knowledge gleaned from successfully navigating the milestone leap to college. He remembers her allegiance to the boys in preparing them for the challenge of making the transition to university in unfamiliar locales.

Keith recounted how Douglas specifically drew upon her own experiences getting ready for and enduring college to prepare them for the same. He likened it to her asking, "'What ways can I share my experience that I've gone through to help kind of prepare you for that role?' which she did in spades." Keith described a brief list of college preparatory items that Douglas covered with his cohort:

> She showed us how the college application process goes. Here's what to expect when you go talk to the recruiters for these schools. Here's how to prepare for your interviews. Here's how to prepare academically for what's coming for you. You're going to have to choose a major. You're going to have to do X, Y, and Z when you get to campus.

Keith was impressed by the thorough grounding he and his peers received from Douglas in all facets of choosing a college, describing what most would consider the purview of the school counselor, except that under Douglas, they received more personalized and individualized suggestions from a Black woman talking to Black boys who would soon encounter predominantly white spaces. Ms. Allen also recognized how Douglas took the extra step to help students make prepared and informed choices for life after graduation. She shared,

> I think just some of those talks, I'm sure, that he had with Dr. Douglas helped guide him. He was probably able to get a lot of guidance of his choices, of what direction to go and what steps, colleges, for example. I'm sure that had a lot to do with where he is and where he's going today.

The boys and their parents clearly indicated that Douglas deeply valued the boys' potential to succeed in college. She made sure to help them make informed choices.

Role Modeling Confidence and Poise While Navigating Professional Spaces. Two of Douglas' students were explicit in identifying the importance of her leadership self-assurance and her dignified air. They described her confidence and poise as leaving a lasting impression, modeling how they might navigate professional contexts.

Rashad saw in Douglas a model of moving through the workplace with "your head high," as she balanced being on top of things, being poised, and being disciplined." He stated that despite the gender difference, certain of her behaviors could be adopted for his own use:

> When I think of Ms. Douglas, that's what I think about. Poise is very big to me… I don't think I ever never seen Ms. Douglas snap, but she would look at you, and you already knew what time it was…the way she handled people with poise. Again, because she's a woman, there's only so much I can grab from her, because I'm a man. But the things that I can take from her, some things is the mental part of it, right? So just how you handle people, how you speak to people. And again, because I've seen her doing it in different roles.

Rashad allowed for a gendered idea of what he gleaned from Douglas as a role model, while acknowledging that he and his peers still learned powerful lessons witnessing her mental strength and confidence. Rashad also explicitly addressed Douglas' self-confidence when engaging white people, describing her ability to code-switch as influential. He reflected on "seeing how Ms. Douglas interacted with white folks. You know what I mean? Subconsciously, just seeing that stuff. Seeing how she speak to them, seeing how her demeanor is with them versus with us." He

was inspired by her ability to fluidly move among different cultural contexts and understood it to be a skill that would serve him well in the future.

Keith, too, was impressed with Douglas' professional demeanor, believing it to be something that he should emulate. He shared,

> She's a young black woman being put into these leadership roles. And a lot of that was because of the way that she carried herself. So she always carried herself professionally. She's well spoken. She went about things the right way. I can't remember who said earlier, but her background in psychology definitely helped with that. So I just remember thinking that's something I could always incorporate and take into whatever it is I'm doing.

Rashad and Keith revealed an essential aspect of Douglas's role model identity–her cross-cultural fluency expressed through a supremely confident and demonstrably competent approach. The boys were struck by the way Douglas moved through the world of St. Aloysius and were inspired to adopt a similar manner as they experienced the new world they would encounter beyond high school.

Antoine also emphasized Williams' vulnerability as a compelling quality of her role model and mentor identity. He illustrated an encounter he observed between Williams and a teacher at her daughter's school on the telephone:

> … I remember one time when she was the Dean at the time I was sitting in her office. And Bree [William's daughter], she called. Bree was having some issues at school… something happened between her and the teacher. And Dr. Williams called, and she put it on speaker. She didn't have to do that for me, I'm a child. But because relationship, right? She was going back and forth with the teacher. And I could tell that the teacher didn't

> understand what this black woman is saying about her child. I could hear the disconnect. And I'm 17 years old, 18 years old, like whoa, so that's what it sounds like on the other side. And she popped. She muted it and she took her glasses off. She started to cry because she knew that her baby was getting treated a certain way and it was hurting her baby. She wanted to nut up on her. But when she muted it, took... Black women are so powerful. She took her glasses off and she just cried, while the woman was still talking. And she got herself back together, she put her glasses back on and she handled it the system way. She taught me how to channel my energy when the system is failing, because you don't have the privilege or the luxury to act out. And seeing that, I saw her vulnerability, but I also saw her strength.

In this powerful example, Williams not only exhibited a humanizing element of herself, but she indirectly impacted Antoine by showing him how one can hold sadness and righteous anger at the same time while also acknowledging the need to work within a system that often fails Black students and their families. To Antoine, her actions–and non-actions–in this brief phone call gave him both a personal example and practical steps he could take in the future as he pursues his aspirations yet faces systems and institutions designed to impede his forward path.

Mentoring Through Developing Leadership Opportunities and High Expectations. To their former students, Douglas and Williams modeled ways of being and doing that were matched by and reflected in their mentoring. Keith remembered Douglas' guidance being intentional in not only suggesting possibilities for what he might do, but also reinforcing how he should comport himself in pursuing his ambitions:

> She was like, 'Hey, you should take psychology. I think you would really like. You would really love it.' I just remember her, those words and that encouragement from her,

> but I also remember her just telling me, ‘Hey, make sure you go out there and represent yourself as a Black man. Make sure that you... There's no more time to play. You're going on to do things. Make sure that you represent and carry yourself in a certain way and that you are achieving and doing the things that you need to be doing.’

Keith experienced Douglas’ impact when she identified a nugget of his interest, encouraged him to pursue it, and subtly reminded him to counteract negative perceptions of Black boys and men.

Antoine recalled Williams’ mentorship being driven by the opportunities it afforded mentees based on the relationships she had developed, specifically among former students. He continued,

> I think Dr. Williams's best mentoring is she gives opportunity. She's always calling on her former students. Always. She's not going to call on somebody she doesn't know. I know friends who've gotten jobs based off her mentoring, like, ‘Hey, I'm recommending this person, Hey, I'm recommending this person.’ I know plenty of friends, but like, ‘Hey, call Will, call Will. Call Will. She'll go over with you with the job requirements, what you need to do, what degrees you need, how to get in there, who to call…’

Antoine’s reflection underlines Williams’ belief in and continued support for her mentees into adulthood so that they might similarly impact others and their communities.

Keith also stated that Douglas’s mentorship was grounded in leadership development and in providing students with a sense of the possibilities for them to directly impact their school community. He recounted being a part of student government, over which Douglas was the faculty sponsor:

> When she was over student body and then she was over the ambassadors too. I just remember her wanting to really slice that up and do more to it. So I remember one of the

> things that she was really pressing was like coming up with more events, coming up with more stuff for students around campus to do. I think that's when we started the tutoring program. So she was just trying to kind of build that leadership aspect of the school up for like the students who were in that.

Keith recounted how Douglas acted on the leadership potential she recognized in the boys, providing opportunities for them to fulfill that promise to improve the student experience at St. Aloysius.

Keith remembered that the student agency that Douglas promoted was accompanied by her mentoring accountability: “She was basically like, ‘you guys are supposed to be in leadership in the school. You're supposed to be, you know, holding a different position. So y'all can't be front row in the video of people fighting.’” Seb added, “She had a real good way, I think, of giving lessons without discipline.” In the above examples, Douglas mentored many boys into leadership positions through an asset-based approach, and Keith and Seb underscored the importance of her lessons on accountable leadership.

Damien’s parents also pointed out how Douglas mentored their son and his peers through developing their confidence through one-on-one conversations and giving them practical leadership opportunities. Ms. Allen relayed, “One of the things I have come to like about Dr. Douglas is the leadership. She would put [the boys] in roles, and they would lead an assembly. They would have to actually get up there and speak.” These confidence-building actions also extended to the way Douglas validated the boys’ agency and potential. Mr. Allen noted,

> Dr. Douglas made them see their net worth. As a parent, you always say your kid's going to be this, but until somebody validate that, it doesn't go anywhere. She let these individuals make their own decisions, but she supported their decision. And that goes a

> long way in life. The support that you get from somebody like a Dr. Douglas saying, 'You could do whatever you want to do. I'm going to be there for you. And you know what? Even when you go out there and it get a little rocky, you have a place to come back and fall back on.'

The type of mentorship provided by Douglas and Williams flowed from their unerring belief in the potential of the boys they educated and a commitment to being servant leaders who encouraged the students to meet the high expectations established for them while also providing a safe space for them to practice their leadership skills and explore their own passions.

Finding Nine: Embodying Motherhood Leadership

> Motherhood as a praxis, institution, and lived experience has been discussed by a myriad of scholars in general and specific ways. The dominant portrayal of what is, and what it means to be a 'mother,' however, remains locked within a reductive and imaginary prism of white supremacy, heteronormativity, and sexism. Feminist scholarship in conjunction with motherhood studies has expanded, and continues to expand, our own analysis as citizens of what motherhood actually looks like within a lived context. Through this scholarship and activism, new definitions and terms have been created, and the freedom around the institution and praxis of motherhood and mothering has also expanded. (Story, 2014, p.8)

Douglas' and Williams' leadership of schools and programs within single-sex secondary educational spaces that benefit Black boys symbolizes meaningful relationships with students as a primary practice. The women embraced relational approaches to role modeling and mentoring that embodied a humanizing ethic. By interrogating the women's ways of being, doing, knowing, and becoming, a conceptualization of motherhood can advance one's understanding of their

relationships with the boys, as well as the liberatory actions they engaged in and sought to impart to the students.

Informed by Patricia Hill Collins' scholarship (2000, 2005, 2016) and its expansive theory of the Black motherhood construct, I have identified within Douglas' and Williams' enactment of role modeling and mentor identities, an embedded notion of *motherhood leadership*. Additionally, working from Collins's intersectional analysis of the concept of motherhood requires rigor and care so as to avoid problematic, stereotypical characterizations about motherhood like Superwoman mythology, Mammy, and Matriarch (Story, 2014) .

Subfindings that reinforce this main finding are Leading with Motherly (and Sisterly) Relatability, Reliability, Nurture, and Grace, and Benefiting from the Complementary Influence of Women and Men in Leadership.

Leading with Motherly (and Sisterly) Relatability, Reliability, Nurture, and Grace. Williams and Douglas' former students express a nuanced sense of the women's leadership styles that prove elusive in describing the distinctly maternal aspects of their engagement with the boys. Damien used *nurture* when attempting to articulate the unique way Black women like Douglas enact leadership:

> A lot of the things that we were facing as young men coming through Aloysius, she had her own experience with it. I think also there's something just about Black women that I can't put into words. And I think when it comes to leadership, it really comes through. Just, there's a maternal side of things where they are looking out for your best interests, they're going to nurture you in ways that folks who may not look like you can do.

Damien's astuteness in recognizing the privilege (and, conversely, the lack of it) among his cohort peers contributes to his sense that Douglas was unique in her leadership ability, attributing this in part to being a Black woman. He added,

> The diversity of the Black experience in South LA, that was huge to really be able to understand that there's going to be privilege in some cases, there's going to be folks who are marginalized. And to know how to meet all of us, and then also how to bring us together. I think that's something she embodies as a Black woman and as a leader that I truly couldn't say someone else could actually do what she does and do it well.

Damien hints that it was not just developing relationships that endeared Douglas to the students. There was something deeper. He intimates that the *type* of relationship was essential in distinguishing Douglas' leadership from others and, specifically, the flattening of power dynamics in her relations with the students and others.

Keith maintained that Douglas' emphasizing the students' interior development was an important factor in enriching her connections to them:

> Being led under somebody like Ms. Douglas is also important because I would say that Black women tend to focus on who the young men are becoming internally a little more. One of those things that I loved about Ms. Douglas is that we had an actual relationship. It was, 'How are you doing? How are you dealing with the things that you're going through? How's your mental health? How you feel about that?' All the questions that don't always get asked.

Through Keith's reflection, one gains a sense of the mother-like tenderness through which Douglas created the mentioned soft spaces that were essential to the relationships she forged with the boys.

Sebastian explicitly identified motherhood as a quality that Douglas personified, but without the admonitions that might come from one's own mother. He explained,

> I think what Dr. Douglas does a really good job of, just one of her many traits, is she's able to embody the motherhood that we have at home in a way that still makes us get the job done of we need to get done, but also lets us know, if you do have a situation, I'm not judging you. Your mom wouldn't judge you either. It's just more like, 'Okay, so how do you now either fix it, or what is the next step for you?'

Sebastian said that the freedom to err and learn from one's mistakes without judgment was central to Douglas's mentorship, stating, "Again, she gives you that grace to bump your head. You still going to get your love on the way back." He generalizes this in gendered terms as being different from the way men approach mentoring–one in which, for women, love is sacrosanct–and which lifted the burden of adolescent Black male masculinity while supporting his family economically and emotionally. He continued,

> I think there's a grace from a woman's perspective that can provide a way of love that's different, that a male can't provide. While we needed both at 14 years old, I think a lot of us were coming from territories and environments where we had to be the tough person all the time. We had to be the provider. I had to work to put food on the table for my mom, so we just needed to sometimes take that bail off, if that's the best way to say it.

In the narrowly defined context of Black masculinity and expectation, Sebastian discussed how he appreciated the grace given to him and the others by Douglas as one who accepted them as they were. Yet, she did not allow them to indulge their doubts for long, as she provided a safe space for dialogue and problem-solving.

Douglas' students also referred to a "Big Sister" connection embedded in the motherhood leadership typology. Again, care was essential to the mentoring relationship, colored by a perception of Douglas as a Big Sister fostered, in part, by the boys and Douglas being cultural contemporaries experiencing the world similarly–young, gifted, and Black from similar communities, with overlapping cultural tastes and influences. Douglas' sisterly impact was important to boys like Damien, who did not have a biological sister. He confided,

> There was this almost big brother, big sister sort of relationship. It was definitely professional, for sure. No boundaries were crossed or anything like that. But the way in which she mentored us, the way in which she loved us and looked at us, it was almost like going to see her was like going to see your big sister. If you have one. I don't have a big sister, but I would imagine it would be like that.

Damien intimated that Douglas alternated between big sister and surrogate mom as the situation required, ensuring that he and his peers felt validated and loved.

Adding on to the mother-sisterly connection noted by Damien, Keith viewed the cultural commonalities as contributing to the genuine and effortless relatability between Douglas and his cohort:

> So I think she was just able to relate to us a little bit more and vice versa. And so when we went in there, it was natural, we probably listened to somewhat kind of the same music, you know what I mean? Saying she could relate to us and joke with and talk to us.

Rashad echoed this sentiment of relatable connection, describing Douglas' way in the same vein as the big sister who shares certain lessons that one's own mother stops short of, and thus, remaining wholly authentic. He relayed,

> But she kept it real too. You know what I mean? That's another thing too, right? So she was probably telling us stuff that we probably wasn't even getting at home, right? Which would continue to draw somebody toward them. You know what I mean?

Rashad, Damien, and Keith each express an idea about Douglas's relationships with them being bound and strengthened by mothering (and sisterly) instincts. It was these instincts, as much as anything, that guided the love, vulnerability, and deep respect developed within and among the boys.

Williams's mothering instincts, while strict, were also dear to her students. Antoine described motherhood leadership in Williams's mentorship as encompassing aspects of life both inside and outside of school. He described,

> I think that her time, during that she became more of our mother than anything because she didn't take no mess. She didn't have any excuses. And she got in our business. So just like my single black mama from the hood, she was in my business. She want to know what girls I'm talking to. She picking up the phone when I'm on the phone, she became my mother… I think that's the best thing that I can sum it up with… She cared about us, and we didn't feel like we were cared about.

For Antoine, the motherhood leadership exhibited by Williams gave him a palpable sense of being seen, validated, and encouraged to grow beyond his mistakes or challenges.

The reflections of the former students of both women make it clear that the leaders' relatability, nurturance, and gracious guidance were invaluable to the boys' success. This leadership was distinct from that of men in their lives and, therefore, needed.

Benefiting from the Complementary Influence of Women and Men in Leadership.

Douglas's and Williams's former students have shared insights about the role modeling and

mentoring practiced by these women that they deemed to be uniquely expressed in Black womanhood. They were clearly impacted by experiencing a quality of and approach to leadership delivered by the women. The students did not qualify the perceived differences between the men and Douglas and Williams as either better or worse, but they acknowledged them as different. They expressed a benefit from experiencing the balance of both types of influence and guidance.

Damien determined that the notion of *only* Black men leading single-sex schools or programs to benefit Black boys lacked a critical understanding of the complex needs of Black male students and the requirements for school leaders to fulfill those needs. He laid out,

> I don't think that there's a one-way answer, there should only be black female school leaders or Black male school leaders. I think it's more so about what type of culture are they setting? How are they seeing your students? Are they seeing them in their fullness, in their complete humanity? Are they seeing them as square pegs that they're trying to round out to fit into this hole? Because, if that's the case, then I wouldn't want that sort of leader because they're trying to form me into a certain being. And that might not… actually amplify my gifts and my essence. So, I would say that there's value in having Black female school leaders, they bring skills that they've acquired, but they also can bring in essence, if you think about their context and their background, that are just as valuable as having a Black male school leader.

Damien zeroed in on Douglas's authentic and humanizing leadership qualities, intimating that she understood the nuances in the challenges faced by Black male students to transcend the norms of masculinity that perhaps a male leader could not.

Bobby critiqued the men in leadership that he had experienced as punitive in approach and acknowledged that this style of corrective action had drawbacks. He shared,

> Men tend to be more disciplinary, they tend to have hard minds…They could have been a swell guy, but their interactions with them didn't cultivate any type of leniency or any type of interaction. So, that's where my preference would go, purely of outlook.

Without directly saying it, Bobby appeared to appreciate the relational approach of a woman leader. He did not seem to ask for leniency or a pass for misbehavior, for example, but rather appreciated Douglas's restorative approach.

Keith viewed what he perceived as the interior qualities of Black women and men as important to their leadership approaches. For him, these gendered qualities result in cultivating different contours of one's own interior development:

> I will say that there is still a need and a space for Black women to lead. Again, there are just things from Black women that you cannot get, that instinctive nurture that Black women have, I don't think Black men have that. Even the most well-intentioned, I just think it's just different. We're here to support you. We're here to push you. We're here to drive you. But I think it's from a... It is from a different place. It comes across differently. You learn different things from it. You internalize different things from it. And so I think there's a need for both.

Without discounting the need for Black men in his life, Keith understood the difference between the leadership styles of Black women and men, identifying that he needed to be pushed at times. However, he also needed to be validated, engaged in conversation, and guided through whatever decision tree might face him at the moment.

Bobby highlighted balance as being a critical piece of one's journey under the tutelage of men and women mentors and role models. He explained,

> When it comes to the beauty of a role model or leadership, is more so the optionality of it to come to her and say, 'Hey, these are my problems. What do you think I should do for advice?' Now, she would direct it sometimes to a male figure. But instead of being all Army or Navy style, all the time, be a man, sometimes that nurturing can lead to some of the same, if not similar results. Now, don't get me wrong, myself included, some of these fellows on the call and everybody else in my class, we need that sometime. Don't get me wrong. But she, again, provided a balance for us, I think, of being a role model, to Rashad's point. And walking around with her confidence and knowing that we can approach her, but she can also guide us to where we need to, too.

In this reflection, Bobby echoed Keith's sentiment that the nuance of Douglas' leadership gave them a space where they would receive both grace and guidance, not just discipline.

Keith returned to the theme of vulnerability as central to contrasting men's and women's leadership styles. He specifically differentiated Douglas from the men he had encountered, with most men feeling that they cannot be vulnerable:

> Yeah, I think for me, Miss Douglas, she made it easy to talk to by always being vulnerable. I know most coaches, they got to be stoic, or just got to be strong, or have another type of vibe, but Miss Douglas was always vulnerable, so it was easy to kind of also have those vulnerable conversations with her.

In a similar example that highlighted Douglas' relational approach, Sebastian compared his experience as a high school athlete and the approaches of the men who coached him with that of Douglas:

> We'll just take sports, for example. We all play our respective sports here. I think it was more lane focused, if I can describe it. So in the aspect of mentoring for sports, 'Hey, look, I can tell you how to get you max preps footage, the five stars, to get recruited, then I'll give you this on the option as a side, for a life…' I think more so for Dr. Douglas, I wouldn't say that it was more expert advice, it was more so like, 'We going to work this out, but you really going to do the work, and I'm going to just be here to make sure you don't fall too far out of your lane.'

Sebastien and Keith contrasted Douglas's holistic, humanizing approach with the limited singular essence of the men–namely coaches–he experienced at Aloysius. He characterized both as being driven by love, guidance, and mentorship, yet felt them differently. His stark assessment of the traditional masculine interactions below illuminates the differences in the outward expression of the three by Douglas and the men. Keith added,

> It's both love, it's both guidance, and mentorship to some degree, but it's different. …And I think, especially when you're talking about coaches, there's a very specific kind of support you get from, I think coaches, especially. And if I had to sum that up… pardon my french, but it's, 'Quit being a bitch,' is pretty much the majority of what you get from.... When you play sports, no matter what problem it is you have. But I think with women, a lot of times, and I got this a lot from Miss Douglas is that it's, 'Okay, what's the issue that you having? Let's try to get to the bottom. Let's figure out why this situation is happening the way it is, and let's figure out how, not only for you to perform as if you have this figured out, but let's figure out how to actually figure it out, and make sure that the next time you run into the same situation, you'd be all right.'...And I think that's the difference, sometimes, between male mentors and female mentors.

In this final selection, Keith summarized the general feeling of the boys who benefited from Douglas's leadership. He acknowledged the need for the "tough love" of the men, especially coaches, in their lives, but he also articulated that he and his peers, especially living in a context where the slightest misstep could have consequences, needed the soft space of a woman who could lead them through their choices and next steps, too.

Williams's former student Antoine expressed strong feelings about women's ability to lead and rejected the idea that they could not or should not direct schools or programs for Black boys. This was informed by his experience with Williams guiding the Gentleman Scholars Male Academy at Miller Magnet.

> I think it's very misguided, misogynistic to be exact. The future is a woman. I don't know why we've been systematically oppressed to say our black women can't lead male programs, or coach a male football team or a basketball team, when she's the one that has given you life itself. Teachers are majority women. If you look at it in the history books, I'm a black history guy. I wasn't really seeing no black male teachers dealing with us back in the fifties and sixties and seventies. A few, but we go to work. We had to do certain things. Right?

Antoine was forthright in championing the abilities of women in education, inferring that their school leadership qualities were an extension of the predominance of Black women teaching in K-12 education brought about by historical circumstance. He added that men should play a role too. "Is there a male presence that's needed? Absolutely," he asserted.

While the parent participants did not mention any specific shortcomings of Douglas, who led the school that their son Damien attended, they did expound upon the need for a team of complementary male and female role models and mentors in the lives of young Black men. They

first referenced the power of female leadership with male supporters as teachers, coaches, and support staff, almost like a leadership-by-committee model. Damien's father, Mr. Allen, shared,

> What she did with the young men and what she is doing with the young men is, she still have foot soldiers around her that are male figures, that are Black Gentlemen Scholars figures, that are strong in the community, and strong in the boys' lives. So she didn't take on the persona, 'I'm he-woman, I'm about to do it all.' She put some great foot soldiers in good spots, and she utilized those particular individuals' personality to coexist with her personality, to get across the message, 'You're going to be a male, you're going to be a strong male. You just happen to be under my umbrella, but my umbrella has many spokes in it.'

Mr. Allen identified two important elements of Douglas's leadership: her acknowledgment of the need for young men to have male and female role models and mentors in their lives, as well as Douglas's dynamic and compassionate approach to creating a team of wrap-around support for the boys. Additionally, he noted the empowering nature of Douglas's impact on Damien's maturation as a young man:

> She wasn't a mother figure, but it was somewhat of a different sex for him. So he had to kind of like bounce ideas off his mom, then go back and bounce them off of her. So instead of having that father figure, like most principals are males, he can come to me to say, 'Well, dad, what do you think about...' You have to go see your mother, get a woman's opinion, and then use your dad as a father figure to go and present yourself. And that's what I think, it helps him.

As opposed to being authoritarian and dictating what Damien should or should not do with a choice or challenge in front of him, Douglas invited Damien to engage in dialogue and reflection while encouraging him to develop his relational and decision-making skills with his parents.

Summary

Two Black women school leaders guiding Black boys in all-boys-of-color secondary schools or programs embodied contours of school leadership, mentoring, and role modeling that were in service primarily to their Black male students and that extended to the students' families and communities. This contrasts with leaders who move in service to the institutions and organizations that hire them. For Drs. Douglas and Williams, the institution delivered the proper context in which they were prompted to subvert institutional rules and policies in favor of leveraging organic, warm, loving, and genuine relationships with their Black boys characterized by mutual trust, high expectations, and a lack of negative judgment. The women were committed to meeting the needs and energies of Black boys through heart work, and they rejected problematic masculine expectations that the Black boys faced outside of the spaces they created. These *soft spaces* were generative, tied to the women's experiences of becoming, allowing them to view the Black adolescent boys as fully human while being designed to reproduce in the boys an ethos that transcended narrow masculinities to realize their whole selves.

The boys, led by each of the women and their parents, perceived the women's impact differently from the male leaders they encountered. The former students viewed Douglas and Williams as an amalgam of identities–teacher, dean, assistant principal, principal, counselor, contemporary, mother, and sister—who operated with realness, vulnerability, and by cultivating long-term relationships with them beyond their time together during high school. In contrast to the men the boys encountered, the women nurtured close connections by ensuring they were accessible. Moreover, the students and parents were impacted by the women leaders' abilities across various areas. The former students and their parents highlighted the women's broad impact on the boys, including their academic success through mentoring and role modeling;

inspiring, encouraging, and reinforcing the best aspects of them throughout their high school journeys and into college; and the personal impact the women had on the boys. The humanizing ethic that the women enacted was instrumental in how the boys and parents distinguished that approach from traditional masculine expressions of leadership.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

Overview

Black students–Black boys in particular–have been underserved by K-12 schools and school districts in the U.S. as a matter of course. Historically, the data consistently reflect educational outcomes of African American boys at or near the bottom of indices that capture the demographic academic performance of student groups (Bristol, 2015; Donnor & Brown, 2011; Duncan, 2002; Holzman, 2006; Howard, 2008, 2013; Howard & Flennaugh, 2011; Jackson & Moore III, 2006; Johnson-Bailey et al., 2014; Miller Dyce, 2013; Noguera, 2003; Quigley & Mitchell, 2018; Toldson et al., 2009; Warren et al., 2016).

This qualitative study is driven by an overarching essential question: how can schools and school districts reverse decades of under-educating Black boys to ensure that their academic potential is realized? Specifically, I seek to examine one response to Black male underachievement–the single-sex educational model and its embedded gendered assumptions about role model theory, mentoring, and nurture to benefit Black boys. These single-sex educational spaces that serve either all or mostly Black boys are primarily designed with the expectation that Black men will fill school leadership and faculty roles based on a belief that they transmit relational care, compassion, and understanding toward Black boys and adolescents and their relational learning styles, verve, and ways of being and doing (Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Terry et al., 2014) My study sought to interrogate and interrupt these embedded assumptions by focusing on the impact of Black women leaders.

I framed my study through interviews that captured the voices and stories of two extraordinary Black women leading an all-male school and program, respectively, serving Black male adolescents and former students who experienced the women's leadership firsthand. I also

secured insights from some parents of the students about their perceptions of the two leaders and their impact on the boys. Their stories and this study honor the Black narrative tradition at work in the mentoring and role modeling that was provided by the women while also being an essential aspect of the qualitative methodology behind this study (Tolliver, 2022). Storytelling was at the heart of my data collection and was the basis for exploring the schooling experiences of the women and their students, and how I share those experiences. The participants' stories were inspired by the following research questions:

1. In what ways do Black women school leaders enact role model and mentor identities when interacting with Black boys in all-boys-of-color secondary schools and/or programs?
    a. What aspects of the role model and/or mentoring relationship do Black women school leaders value as important to the educational success of Black boys in all-boys of color secondary schools/programs?
2. How do African American males, who graduated from all-male Black secondary academies and/or programs headed by Black women, perceive the impact of the women as mentors and role models?
3. How and what do parents of these former Black students view as either the benefits and/or shortcomings of Black women leading these single-sex, all male school spaces specifically designed to foster the academic success and social-emotional well-being of their male children.

This study primarily advances the practically non-existent research on the leadership ways of Black women who head single-sex schools and programs in service to Black boys.

Secondarily, it contributes to the limited research on the effectiveness of single-sex educational spaces for Black males.

In this chapter, I review, summarize and interpret my findings, connecting them to the literature and my conceptual framework in Chapter Two. Next, I consider the implications of my study. Then I present my study's limitations and suggestions for future research. I conclude by sharing additional thoughts, ideas, and reflection.

Review of the Findings

A legacy of Black educator courage and excellence inspires this study. Understanding that it was at one time illegal in the United States to teach an enslaved Black person to read or write, many of the first Black men and women teachers worked in secret, without formal training, in the dark of night, under the glow of candlelight and the threat of death, because they understood the importance of language and literacy to a people, their freedom, and their future. This pursuit of literacy intensified after emancipation from enslavement through the creation of 19th Century literary societies and the founding of the first schools for Black children to help ensure a path toward true liberation for Blacks in America (Lynn, 2002; McCluskey, 1997, 2014; Muhammad, 2020; Warren, 2005). Unfortunately, this drive for education as a means for racial uplift has been performed in the face of abject miseducation spurred by both open individual hostility toward Black students and systemic barriers, resulting in educational underachievement (Bristol, 2015; Quigley & Mitchell, 2018).

In this context of (and in response to) the institutional failure of U.S. education to serve Black students, single-sex educational spaces for Black males were created. Largely a vision of Black men educators to meet what was seen as the unique educational needs of Black boys, these

all-male environments pursued long-term academic, cultural, social, emotional, and economic advancement for Black male students (Quigley & Mitchell, 2018).

A significant design aspect of these educational spaces to support the success of Black boys was the role modeling and mentoring that Black men provide to the students. The Black male role model construct suggests that adult Black male figures represent potential futures for Black male students, showing them who and what they can aspire to (T. King, 2011). It also suggests that these role models and mentors play a part in shaping the students' academic identities by emphasizing leadership, masculinity, and manhood, as well as social and study skills (Whiting, 2006). Additionally, mentoring is seen as a form of intervention and a key protective factor for Black boys (Fergus & Noguera, 2010; Gordon et al., 2010; Quigley & Mitchell, 2018). Yet, this analysis of "Black men should and best can role model for Black boys," while well-intentioned, is limited by its patriarchal focus. From anecdotal to oral tradition to peer-reviewed research, plenty of evidence is dedicated to Black women's strength, impact, and educational offerings for Black boys and girls. My study aims to highlight this element to perhaps better inform future policy and structural decisions for the education of Black boys.

My study participants were inheritors and stewards of the legacy of Black educator excellence, specifically as Black women. They stood on the shoulders of brilliant Black women school leaders who preceded them and pioneered education for Black children characterized by compassion, care, and commitment (Lynn & Jennings, 2009; McCluskey, 1997). The study also provides a glimpse into the expanded promise of single-sex educational initiatives in reversing decades of school failure for Black boys. Below, I organize my discussion around several key points derived from my findings.

The Women Prioritized Relationships Grounded in Authenticity and Servant Leadership

Supporting the idea that all-Black male educational spaces insulate Black boys from the hostile, dehumanizing educational environments that characterize so many schools and classrooms in the U.S., my study revealed that both women employed relational leadership approaches in which they authentically connected with their students within their alternative spaces, validating and affirming their Black male students in ways that traditional schools and school leaders are unable (Terry et al., 2014). One of the women leaders explicitly characterized her approach as "wasn't textbook leadership, but basically, led from the heart." This connective leadership as heart work confirmed the importance of critical habits of mind and heart instead of technical leadership attributes privileged in formal educational leadership programs (Khalifa et al., 2018; Lopez, 2003).

The study participants' purpose and practice of "relationships over rules and roles" reflected the organic understanding of Black male adolescents' relational learning styles and energies advocated by proponents of single-sex educational spaces that serve Black boys (Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Terry et al., 2014). Consistent with Sabrina King's research (1993) on the benefits to Black students of seeing Black teachers and leaders as models enacting multifaceted roles such as surrogate parent figures, disciplinarians, counselors, and advocates, the two women in my study lived into role modeling and mentoring identities that their students acknowledged as expansive–teacher, dean, disciplinarian, assistant principal, principal, counselor, contemporary, mother, and sister–to develop long-term relationships with the students in high school, and beyond into young adulthood.

Interestingly, regarding the role of disciplinarian, one of the women held that her womanly instincts helped redefine discipline within the school in terms of how it was "understood and received… focusing more on relationships than the actual policy." This idea of

“relationships before rules” is supported by research on Black women leaders in urban schools using their authority to create safe and productive learning environments where they apply their leadership to interpret and implement school policies in ways that prioritize their students' best interests, even when faced with strict district mandates (Bass, 2012).

Ironically, one textbook leadership approach guided the mentoring and role modeling that the women engaged in was servant leadership. Consistent with Greenleaf’s (2002) seminal research on servant leadership, the women placed their students’ needs before the institutions’ to help them grow and develop. One of the women stated, “I don't know that I care about St. Aloysius being successful as much as I care about each student at St. Aloysius being successful.” Her counterpart explained her servant leader stance, “leading from behind makes you more accessible to folks in a way that… there's that built-in relationship.” Servant leadership provided a framework within which authentic relationships with their Black boys were essential and able to flourish.

My study also affirms that a commitment to community is indispensable to school leadership where authentic connections with the students and their families are of the utmost importance (Khalifa et al., 2018). One of the leaders stated that her “school in the inner city needed someone that loved all aspects of the community that it was situated in.” The woman’s leadership philosophy captures Lynn’s (2002) notion of authentically being in community with Black students while caring for and empowering them.

My study's findings reveal the women’s ability to develop authentic relationships with their students. This was achieved in part by intentionally structuring environments inside the school that promoted meaningful connections between them and allowed space for such bonds to strengthen naturally.

Relationships were Nurtured by Creating Intentional and Organic Soft Spaces

One aspect of my study that moved me with its poignancy was the revelation about how the women nurtured their relationships with the Black boys. The role of the women's leadership is central to my study since they both embodied a belief that the way schools and society at large traditionally view and respond to Black boys is punitive and unforgiving.

In response to the hard and harsh world they felt the boys faced, the women were devoted to creating soft spaces for their Black male students characterized by care, grace and rigorously high expectations. Their emphasis on delivering tender and gentle experiences to balance the callousness of a world often unkind to Black men and boys answers Williams' (2004) research, which suggests that traditional single-sex academy models led by Black men constrain the development of fully realized Black boys because of the limiting attributes of patriarchal and toxic Black masculinity. This softening of the spaces within schools presents alternative milieus to those where the "you got to man up" bravado of the male teachers prevailed. Instead, their Black boys learned more about the world and themselves, consistent with Odih's (2002) critique of the essentialist nature of the traditional mentoring model and how it relegates alternative masculinities and women by limiting the way we imagine Black men and boys and their multiple and various identities.

The women's leadership philosophies existed in contrast to the restrictive expectations that much of society has for Black boys. As one of the women related, her boys no longer had to "ignore parts of themselves." An example of this was in the lunchtime gatherings that both women promoted. They viewed these structured encounters as extending the organic relationships between them and the boys, nurturing the connections with them, and providing opportunities for the women to model accessibility. Spending lunch in these spaces was an

essential experience that the boys valued. Each of them shared their memories of hanging out in her workspace, playing dominoes, and conversing. These lunch gatherings exemplified the authenticity that Douglas led with, welcoming the fullness of her boys' humanity into the learning environment. This humanizing approach honored the knowledges and experiences that their Black male students brought to the school and classroom. They were viewed as assets to build on rather than flaws to be fixed (Watson et al., 2016). The humanizing experiences also further supported the strong relationships so essential to the kind of role modeling and mentoring the women carried out.

As stated earlier, building close relationships with and among their Black boys was foundational to the women's work. The women were intentional about designing opportunities to connect with boys, whether leveraging what organically developed or was purposefully structured.

The idea of building intentional and organic soft spaces on which their Black boys could land at once supports and is reinforced by the idea of schools that, in Douglas' words, are more than classrooms and offices, but rather designed as healing spaces in which the boys were free to enter school gates through which they could bring their whole selves.

The Women Set High–Yet Realistic–Academic and Professional Expectations for their Black Male Students

The women rejected deficit notions of their Black male students. Rather, they understood the failure of traditional schooling to successfully educate Black boys and recognize their assets (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Ferguson, 2003; Howard, 2013). Williams and Douglas showed an unwavering belief in the boys' ability to excel. They reinforced Dee's (2004) idea of role model

effects–especially the impact on perceptions of student performance–based on race-matching and ethnicity but, notably, not gender, which was included in Dee's findings.

Moreover, the two leaders reflect the importance of relationships to academic expectations in all-male school-based, culturally relevant mentoring contexts, specifically cultivating relationships and "knowing" students *before* establishing expectations for them. As emphasized previously, mutual trust between the mentors and their mentees brought forth the vulnerabilities of each to affirm their experiences as strengths to be further developed rather than shortcomings needing correction. The women's mentoring recognized education as a liberating process and practice that aids in the overall growth of the boys (Watson et al., 2016).

Storytelling was vital to how they modeled and mentored their expectations as well. One of the former students recounted that "every day was a story," bolstering the assertion made by the school leader who mentored him that her storytelling was an intentional aspect of her approach to role modeling and mentoring. She said she shared stories with the boys that she determined would be meaningful to them. This speaks to how she embraced the Black narrative tradition to deliver an important part of her interior self to the Black boys she guided. Her stories seemed central to the boys' personal and intellectual development, serving as a template for former students to apply to future encounters. Moreover, equally significant to me as a researcher, storytelling provided a compelling qualitative footing on which to present my data (Tolliver, 2022).

Mentoring Was Focused on Accentuating the Positive and Encouraging Excellence

While not leading a formal school-based mentoring program, the leaders' embrace of mentorship for their Black boys echoed research by Mitchell and Stewart (2013) that revealed how Afrocentric school-based mentoring focused on improving academic achievement,

increasing personal-social development, and enhancing collaborative enrichment activities that incorporate post-secondary career and college interest and planning. Thus, it produced increased academic achievement outcomes and influenced mentees' ability to connect the importance of academics to the real world as well as the need for support with goal setting and goal attainment. I should note that the women did not employ an Afrocentric mentoring model. However, each embraced culturally responsive role model and mentor actions that promoted the holistic development of the students and were instrumental to the future-focused orientation of the women's leadership in service to the boys, preparing them for the world they would encounter when they left high school to attend college and enter the workforce.

The women created impactful school cultures and climates by highlighting goal attainment and accomplishment and, specifically, Black excellence, both personally and in a broader historical context within the physical learning environment. Their work reinforced the idea established by Mael et al, (2005) in the literature on single-sex schools about the influence of school culture and climate on performance metrics such as academic aspirations, leadership opportunities, and, significantly, the satisfaction of students and parents.

The Women were Committed to their Students' Academic Success

A foundational aspect of the Black women leaders' enactment of role-model and mentor identities in service to the boys was a primary duty to ensure their academic success. Modeling academic pursuits such as terminal degrees while engaging the boys in intellectually rigorous learning experiences was essential to the women's work and, according to the stories shared by their former students, made an indelible impact on their academic identities.

The women communicated that they measured their students' academic success holistically, using multiple metrics that reflected the achievement expectations that they

established for the boys. Grades and grade point averages were vital because of their importance to another key metric of their academic success: college admission. Grades, SAT scores, and completion of A-G course requirements were, and remain, gatekeepers to college entrance. However, an additional measure of achievement included the development of leadership skills. Douglas encouraged her boys to play important leadership roles in the Associated Student Body (ASB), an elective class she sponsored because it would require them to be role models to foster school pride, organize and manage school-wide events, and engage in community service initiatives. Four of her five former students who participated in my study were ASB members, and one served as student body president and another as vice president during their senior years. Beyond these, another success metric for Douglas's students was completing a two-year corporate intern program, an essential graduation requirement. Finally, the women said they viewed their and their student's successful academic achievement extending beyond high school to include college completion, graduation, and career attainment.

One could infer that the former students' academic achievement was a result of the single-sex school and/or program environments in which they were instructed. Such a notion, as identified in my literature review, is implied by different scholars (Gordon et al., 2010; Mael et al., 2005). Likewise, scholars have identified why, within role model and mentoring constructs, single-sex spaces portend learning success for Black boys. The role model theory promoting Black student achievement assumes that Black men bring a natural understanding of the relational learning styles, energy, and behavior of Black boys and adolescents. Coupled with a deep ethic of care, this understanding supports better academic outcomes(Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Terry et al., 2014). Research also suggests that the academic identity that supports positive achievement outcomes is partially shaped by role models and mentors who

emphasize leadership, masculinity, and manhood, as well as social and study skills (Whiting, 2006).

My findings support my notion that the effectiveness of the specific learning contexts related to my research study was driven by the leadership acumen and qualities of the women spearheading them, given the challenges that the previous school leader and program facilitators faced. This is important to my underlying premise, which advocates that Black women leaders possess both the technical know-how and the intangible qualities necessary to enhance all-male secondary school spaces.

From a mentoring standpoint, the influence of the women leaders on their Black male students is supported by research that identifies no significant differences in student achievement or the quality, intensity, or duration of the mentoring relationship when either men or women mentored boys (Kanchewa et al., 2014). If one of the factors of school leadership, especially for Black boys, is the leaders' mentoring and role modeling impact on their Black male students, then Kanchewa and his colleagues' findings suggest that something beyond the presence of Black men may be the determining factor in the holistic success–academic and otherwise–of the Black boys under Douglas's and Williams's leadership.

It bears mentioning that the women's commitment to the boys' academic attainment harkened back to those seminal Black women educational leadership pioneers discussed earlier: Fanny Jackson Coppin, Lucy Craft Laney, Mary McLeod Bethune, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Anna Julia Cooper (Giles, 2006; Harley, 1996; McCluskey, 1997, 2014; Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Smith, 1982). The women revived a historical blueprint established over a century before as a model for the successful schooling of Black boys today.

The Women Embodied a Humanizing Ethic of Care

At the core of Douglas's and Williams's relational leadership approaches and authenticity was how they characterized their commitment to recognizing the beautiful humanity in each of the boys. Their humanizing practices strengthened their relationships with the boys, enabling their former students' interior development to realize their own and others' humanity, which set them on a path to reach their full potential.

Here, I find it necessary to again distinguish between the school environment itself and those responsible for creating powerful experiences within the school setting. The act of segregating Black boys to establish alternative spaces in which they are free to grow and develop is supported by the research. Quigley and Mitchell (2018) identify all Black male learning contexts as humanizing, affirming, and validating school environments that foster critical race consciousness and support Black students' long-term academic, cultural, emotional, and economic well-being. In the same vein, Terry et al (2014), identify separating Black boys as a way to shield them from hostile and dehumanizing educational settings that often adultify and criminalize them. These alternative learning environments support Black boys in ways that traditional institutions cannot.

Williams and Douglas, though, raise the specter of genuinely joyful, culturally responsive, humanizing practices themselves being the "secret sauce" within all-Black male educational spaces, or at least, an important ingredient as substantiated in Hubbard's and Datnow's (2005) study which found the presence of caring adults to be as significantly impactful on students' experiences as the single-sex school environment. Honoring Collins (2000) and Noddings (1992), Bass identifies the humanizing ethic of care practiced by the women leaders as

liberatory, in that it reflects a moral obligation by Black women educators to advocate for their students in overcoming a larger oppressive educational system (2012).

The impact of the leadership habits described by the women and the former students–profoundly connected, truly accessible, and actively interested in the fullness of the boys' lives in and outside of the school–also speaks to the research on caring as a core leadership tenet and strength (Bass, 2012; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Noddings, 1992). Likewise, the Black women leaders' approaches are consistent with Watson, et al. (2016) and their exploration of the positive effects of Culturally Relevant Care (CRC) on the mentoring experiences of Black and Latinx students in an all-male, school-based mentoring program.

By all accounts, the women embodied a pedagogy of leadership that valued the wisdom and lived experiences Black youth bring to school, seeing them as strengths to build upon rather than weaknesses to fix. Their practices were humanizing, validating, and affirming, and they sought to erase the anti-Black trauma and marginalization commonly experienced by Black males in schools. The leaders' mentoring processes were based on their views of education as a tool for liberation, helping their Black boys improve both individually and within their communities (Watson et al., 2016).

The Women Cultivated Leadership and Personal Integrity

Drs. Douglas and Williams viewed their mentor identities as encompassing the entirety of their social, emotional, intra- and inter-personal, and intellectual lives. The women stated that they drew on their own similarly lived experiences when cultivating the boys' personal growth and developing their unique abilities, skills, and interests, which they deemed essential for fostering agency in the students and empowering them to drive social change. Theirs represents an expansive idea of mentoring–one based on deep connection that extends beyond the

individual success that research suggests is a common and more narrow focus of many formal mentoring programs (Liang et al., 2013).

Stemming from the previously discussed humanizing ethic of care that the women said compelled their work of leading schools and serving their boys, they reflected on their commitment to developing their students holistically. The leaders' recollections exemplified a long-term investment in the students, guided by the women's asset-based approaches regarding what they said they perceived as the limitless potential inherent in their Black boys, which contrasts with the deficit-focused orientation of early mentoring programs (Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001).

Additionally, the former students were adamant that Douglas' and Williams' mentoring required a rigorous sense of self-responsibility from each of them. In this way, the women leaders were at once cheerleaders and taskmasters, giving of themselves fully while allowing the boys to experience school freely and with joy. Yet, while giving them the freedom to make choices among the breadth of decisions related to the many school experiences they encountered, the boys said that they gained an understanding of the consequences that accompanied their decisions. Williams and Douglas were committed to mentoring with grace to ensure the boys' decisions were healthy and informed while honoring their agency to make accountable choices and live with the outcomes of those choices. This was especially relevant to Douglas' students, who participated in leadership development under her guidance as part of student government, for which she served in an adjunct role as ASB adviser.

The Women Nurtured Their Black Boys' Aspirations Through Personal Example and Practical Step-Taking

According to their former Black male students, Dr. Douglas and Dr. Williams epitomized leading by example. The students' reflections about the women exemplifying post-secondary aspirations and achievement, confidence, and poise communicated the highest expectations for them and somewhat recalled Robert Fulghum's famous quote: "Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you." Here again, one discovered in the boys' and parents' insights how the women–within an all-male context–leaned into crafting school cultures and climates that positively impacted their students' academic aspirations, opportunities for leadership, and satisfaction among the students and parents (Mael et al., 2005).

It is important that these were two Black women confirming Whiting's (2006) study, which posits that scholarly identity is developed in part through role models and mentors who support students based on notions of leadership, *masculinity*, and *manhood* (italics mine) in addition to social and study skills. Central to my study is the notion that Black women, too, can support the development of adolescent Black boys' scholarly identities based on expansive rather than narrow ideas about masculinity and manhood. The reflections of Douglas's and Williams's former Black male students who were participants in my study support this belief.

The boy's reflections on the women's nurture of their aspirational identities provide fodder for my interrogation of what I identify as the patriarchy at the root of the vignette I shared in my introduction to this study: the idea that Black men possess a unique (read natural/biological) predisposition to deliver the relational care, compassion, and understanding of Black boys and adolescents, including their learning styles, energy, and ways of being and behaving to ensure their success in school (Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Terry et al., 2014).

This racialized, hegemonic masculinity that drives traditional mentoring is a construct that relegates alternative masculinities and women. Critiques of single-sex mentoring models,

such as Odih's, gain importance when considering the integral role played by Black women in historically advocating for educational leadership and Black advancement (2002). My study did not focus solely on the *academic* impact of mentoring on Black male secondary students. Instead, I explored the holistic benefits of such mentoring on the whole student, with the idea that academic achievement would invariably be one outcome of the warm, tender, and rigorous personal-social development that typified the mentoring delivered by the women. Their mentoring was focused not only on academic achievement but also on collaborative enrichment activities incorporating post-secondary career and college interest and planning as supported by Wyatt's research (2009), albeit within a culturally responsive context, as opposed to Wyatt's Afrocentric context.

The women leaders were purposeful in structuring intersecting role modeling and mentoring experiences consistent with research that identifies formal mentoring as related to role modeling, and emphasizing the quality, frequency and duration of interactions to build a trusting relationship between a youth and non-parent adult (Kanchewa et al., 2014; Wyatt, 2009)

The Women Embodied Motherhood Leadership

Significant among my findings were the mentoring and role-modeling actions that the Black women leaders, their Black male former students, and the Black parents I interviewed identified as overtly and rigorously loving, caring, and familial. The gist of these actions by the Black women leading Black boys within an all-male school context I have termed Motherhood Leadership. This concept is shaped by the Black feminist idea of "Othermothering", which explores Black motherhood as a counter-narrative to the hegemonic White male perspectives that disparage Black women and mothers (Collins, 2000, 2005, 2016; Story, 2014). The data

collected reflected that the women's leadership embodied the core tenets of Othermothering–Collective Responsibility, Nurturing as Resistance, Emotional and Cultural Support, Expanding Motherhood, Activism and Social Justice, and Feminist Framework–in many ways.

Motherhood Leadership looks to Black motherhood scholarship for its inspiration. It situates the Black women school leaders' ways of collective responsibility for caregiving and guidance within the tradition of community mothership. It is reflected in how the two leaders in my study stated how they centered their experiences as Black women to foster critical connections to, care for, and leadership on behalf of the Black boys in their schools.

Typically, in single-sex educational spaces designed to benefit adolescent Black males, the leadership and influence of adult Black men are desired and mostly required. Brooms (2017) has identified Otherfathering as a defining practice of men who teach in, support, and lead these all-boys spaces. Otherfathering is a masculine reframing of Othermothering. Brooms argues that adult Black male teachers who show care and commitment to students and their communities play a crucial role in forming strong student-adult relationships. These father figures are seen by students as key to fostering Black boys' self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. As such, the otherfather serves as a teacher, role model, mentor, and father figure.

Some researchers challenge such notions of role modeling and mentoring in an Otherfathering context as reductionist and not fully capturing the complexities of Black boys and men (Brockenbrough, 2012; Rezai-Rashti & Martino, 2010; Woodson & Pabon, 2016). In focusing Brooms' Otherfather construct solely on school leadership as I have done with the Othermother concept as inspiration for Motherhood Leadership, does one necessarily arrive at Fatherhood Leadership? Possibly. And yet, as the participants in my study attest, and the research that defines Othermothering supports, Black women can be viewed by their Black male

students as promoting the boys' self-assurance, self-worth, and belief in their abilities. And like Brooms identifying Otherfathering's multiple male identities supporting Black male adolescent students, the Black women leaders enacted a mix of roles—teacher, dean, assistant principal, principal, counselor, peer, mother, and sister—while mentoring and role-modeling with authenticity, openness, and building lasting relationships that extended beyond the students' high school years. Given this reality, what is conveyed–about Black women and men, Black boys and girls–in demanding that only Black men lead these spaces? Moreover, what do the derivative origins of the otherfather within an all-Black male context mean when, conversely, Othermothering captures a tradition that extends back to the Nineteenth Century and was identified in the practices of Black women, initially for Black girls but then for Black boys as well? Finally, might what we perceive as Otherfathering among Black men leading schools for Black boys be Motherhood Leadership, only practiced by men? This last question is important. Although some of the former students expressed the idea that there were mentoring and role model aspects to Douglas' and Williams' leadership that were unique to women, is this due to limitations we place on ourselves adhering to narrow masculinities? Are Black men capable of leadership, mentorship and role-modeling grounded in nurture, care, softness, and investment in the fullness of Black boys' humanity? I believe so.

Implications for Practice

This study adds to the extant research on effective leadership of single-sex, all-male schools and programs that seek to provide holistic benefits to black male students. Because of the limited research available on the topic, it aims to initiate the important examination of gendered notions about all-male schools and programs and their effectiveness in serving black boys,

including who should mentor and be role models for Black adolescent males and who should design and lead such schools and programs.

Expand the Body of Research on the Efficacy of Single-Sex Educational Spaces for Black Adolescent Boys and Girls

Presently, there is a dearth of empirical research on the effectiveness of single-sex educational spaces designed to benefit Black students regardless of gender. Given the current emphasis on data-driven school leadership, developers of all-girls or all-boys educational spaces specific to enhancing academic achievement, social-emotional well-being, and college and career readiness for Black students in the secondary grades require research that can qualitatively and quantitatively support the creation and continued existence of such schools and programs. To date, the scant exploration of the single-sex model has resulted in what has primarily been an intuited, albeit enduring, sense that it is a valid intervention for Black children (Terry et al., 2014). School leaders and others concerned with the design and implementation of school experiences that advantage Black boys and girls cannot rely solely on anecdotal evidence to the exclusion of systematic research on the subject. There is a need to critically examine the single-sex model and extend the pertinent body of knowledge to inform practitioners of its true viability.

Continue to Interrogate and Interrupt Narrow Interpretations of Masculinity When Designing Educational Spaces Aimed at the Holistic Benefit of Black Boys

The idea that Black men should define and lead educational interventions to support Black boys' academic achievement is complementary to the old adage uttered in the Black community in which I was raised that says "Mothers raise sons, fathers raise men." It is a notion with a tradition as time-honored as the Black Church's similar insistence on men occupying the

pulpit and leading the congregation (Crowder, 2011). It is a masculine belief that this researcher held for many years, one steeped in reductionist thinking about men and women, boys and girls, that ranges from being overtly patriarchal and paternalistic to downright toxic.

An educational model constructed on such beliefs that marginalizes women and girls and that assumes persons non-conforming to traditional gender identities and roles are nonetheless male *as defined by that very model* requires strident interrogation. To demand that Black women's intellect and maternal instincts–loving, protecting, raising, praising, and caring–that have historically doubled as protective factors within schools for Black girls and Black boys be shunned when rendering school and program designs in service to Black boys is so detrimental as to ultimately be characterized as educational malpractice.

Granted, to engage in such an ardent critique of this model, one should question the value of single-sex schools and programs ostensibly advancing Black boys' achievement. Hence, my previous recommendation.

There are also complexities that complicate the construct of gender relevant to both Black boys and girls, men and women. As examined in Chapter 2, it is necessary to problematize reductive notions of role modeling and mentoring inherent in the all-boys school model, especially with regard to evolving gender identities. Rezai-Rashti and Martino (2010) see such role modeling as idealizing a hegemonic heterosexual masculinity that only perpetuates homophobic, sexist, and misogynistic dynamics within the school setting. Moreover, all-boys school spaces risk reinforcing Black boys' reproduction of a patriarchal, masculine norm (Brockenbrough, 2012; Odih, 2002). Conversely, my notion of Motherhood Leadership is not immune to feminist critiques leveled at simplistic interpretations of Othermothering that essentialize women as maternal and nurturing (Collins, 2005).

Respect Black Women's Leadership and Scholarship Praxis

While the context of this study necessarily focuses on Black women school leaders, the erasure of Black women when considering who should develop and lead all-boys schools and programs designed to advantage Black male students is not solely an educational problem. It is rooted in patriarchy. Using an intersectional frame of analysis, Black male complicity in this erasure is evident. Black men present what is for us a seductive argument: that we should lead academic interventions for adolescent Black males, one that riffs on the Motherhood Leadership tenants of kinship, care, commitment, and collective responsibility for Black boys and their communities, while simultaneously denying Black women leaders the opportunity to do the same when they originated these concepts and practices.

Living with this respect and care for Black women means respecting their outsized role in leading historical and contemporary Black education movements on behalf of Black children–first girls and subsequently boys–as part of an unrelenting quest to promote racial uplift in the United States. It means honoring Black feminist scholarship and applying it to the educational mission and vision of schools and programs serving Black girls and boys. It also means that Black male educators, who are instrumental in the movement, recognize our role in reinforcing how Black women have been made invisible and systematically ignored within single-sex educational spaces created to foster Black boys' school success. The fact that school spaces seemingly built on abolitionist/liberatory underpinnings that should protect and advocate for Black women school leaders requires that those women be silenced in the conceptualization and enactment of a school design for which they have been the primary progenitors and practitioners is obtuse.

Limitations

Consistent with Creswell and Creswell (2018) noting that qualitative research has the inherent limitation of not being widely generalizable, this is a shortcoming of my research study. My intended case scope was always confined by the rarity of Black women leading all-male educational spaces designed to advantage Black adolescent boys. More women leaders would have provided a broader range of practitioners from whom I could have gleaned additional insights to strengthen my data. Of course, my focus was situated on the failure of these spaces to honor Black women's leadership, so the dearth of women on which to focus my study was expected. Hence, I refrained from extrapolating my findings to all Black women leading all-boys schools and serving Black boys. Instead, readers need to determine the extent to which my findings apply and can inform their own contexts.

Another limitation of my case study design is that in each of the two cases, my decision to focus on former students identified by the Black women leaders could be viewed as an inherent bias toward confirming the leaders' reflections. Because the women provided the names of former students, the study risked having school leaders "cherry pick" students partial to their leadership styles, ensuring positive reflections and possibly not providing a wholly objective view about their impact as mentors and role models.

I should add that not all students invited chose to participate. This resulted in another limitation: the disproportionate participation of one of the women leaders, with five former students offering insights compared to the other, for whom only two were involved. This prevented more former students from verifying data collected in interviews with the leader about her leadership practice. Likewise, access to a greater number of parent participants would have

delivered greater triangulation of the data to validate or invalidate data culled from the participant groups in my study.

An important additional limitation is my positive researcher bias toward Black women leaders. While I was adamant about maintaining objectivity during participant interviews and observations, the impetus for this study is grounded in that bias. Firstly, it has been my personal and professional experience to learn from remarkable Black women educators, starting in elementary school and continuing through my professional life. These women have been honored in my acknowledgments that preface this study. It is important that I had a strong father at home who contributed to my personal growth and development. Still, *all* of my professional models and mentors have been Black women. So, any instance where I have determined that Black women leaders have been marginalized or denigrated–regardless of intent–I take personally. Hence, when the vignette I open this study with was shared with me by a colleague after I told her about my proposed dissertation topic, I only leaned further into that bias.

I also recognize that my positionality as a man broaching intersectionality to interrogate a system that has and continues to benefit me can be viewed as a limitation too, however noble and well-meaning my intent. My complicity in the marginalization of women in Black male-dominant discussions on educational spaces and programs to empower Black boys tempers my legitimacy in using a feminist framing to critique those very spaces.

Suggestions for Future Research

As a follow-up to my suggestion to expand the quantitative and qualitative research on single-sex educational spaces designed to benefit Black students–girls and boys alike–there is a need for research that specifically examines the decision-making behind the creation of these schools and programs, given the scarcity of empirical studies on their effectiveness. It would be

important to determine the political, socio-economic, and educational climate, the institutional context (private, charter schools, traditional public), and the administrative processes leading to enacting a school-as-a-whole vision in which *only* girls or boys is mandated.

Because my research focuses on Black women leaders enacting role-model and mentor identities in all-male adolescent contexts serving Black boys, there is a need for research that, conversely, determines how Black men in school and program leadership embrace role-model and mentor identities in all-female student settings serving Black girls. I am uncertain about the data regarding how many brothers are doing this leadership work. Yet, patriarchy leads me to believe that they outnumber the few women leading boys.

Finally, having served in a co-principal arrangement in two separate assignments with women, one Black and the other Latina, I believe the promise of this model warrants research that interrogates how a shared leadership responsibility between Black women and men in schools serving Black students is performed. Does gender, in these instances, impact the division of leadership labor? What collaborative processes exist to ensure shared power, and how do girls and boys (and parents) perceive the model? How might the complementary influence of men and women in leadership expressed in finding nine be revealed?

Ultimately, given the failure of the institution of schooling to effectively and equitably educate Black children in the United States, research and evaluation must inform expanding Black education school and program models designed as interventions that target our students' academic success and social-emotional wellness.

Conclusion and Reflection

I wonder if in my championing Black women leaders, both in the abstract and framing motherhood leadership as a construct, I am reinforcing what Patricia Hill Collins in 2005 critiqued:

> But in spite of its centrality, Black male scholars in particular typically glorify Black motherhood by refusing to acknowledge the issues faced by Black mothers who "came back to the frequently thankless chores of their own loneliness, their own families." By claiming that Black women are richly endowed with devotion, self-sacrifice, and unconditional love the attributes associated with archetypal motherhood–Black men inadvertently foster a different controlling image for Black women, that of the "superstrong Black mother." In many African-American communities so much sanctification surrounds Black motherhood that "the idea that mothers should live lives of sacrifice has come to be seen as the norm." (p. 150)

I have been careful to resist what Collins identifies as the tendency to extrapolate immense respect for Black women school leaders into a "superwoman" caricature. I have also been mindful to objectively acknowledge if and where in their Black former students' reflections this glorification exists. I don't believe it does. Aware of the gender, race, and class dynamics and the power ascribed to me regardless of its regulation and relegation within our broader society, through this study, I have sought to center two Black women who committed themselves to transformative school leadership work to inform how we might approach educational interventions to ensure Black boys' school success.

We must urgently identify these interventions. Black girls and boys are still being failed by a system founded on anti-Blackness. Schools in underserved Black communities continue to

struggle to attract and retain qualified faculty and staff committed to the noble work of changing life trajectories for their students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Black boys are being disciplined disproportionate to their numbers in school (Kunesh & Noltemeyer, 2019). Black girls outpace all other student groups concerning the increase in rates of disciplinary actions toward them (Crenshaw et al., 2015; Morris, 2016). White supremacy is running rampant, attempting to erase historical and current truths from school curricula along with book bans, promoted by the modern-day equivalent to the Daughters of the Confederacy, the Moms for Liberty. We have work to do.

I also celebrate those Black men rigorously grappling with our identities in educational and community leadership positions who seek solutions to the crisis facing Black boys in America's schools. Yes, I connect our efforts on behalf of our boys and young men to the historical excellence embodied in Black women educators who, a century ago, created learning opportunities for Black girls. I vigorously challenge us to reject limiting gendered assumptions about Black women, men, girls, and boys. Still, mine is a loving critique based on a belief that brothers are going to work it out. We cannot be free while harboring oppressive beliefs about our mothers, sisters, daughters, and friends. Yes, I see the contradictions in Tupac Shakur's lyrics that I have appropriated for the title of this study, the language of his short life, and the duality of honoring Black women one minute and in the next, reinforcing the utter misogyny that runs rampant, still, in hip hop music. I wish he had lived long enough to become his best and feminist self. Let those of us living do the interior work of bettering ourselves to help humanize and guide Black men and boys to view Black women and girls as true equals in our liberatory struggle for educational justice.

Appendices: Protocols and Instruments

Appendix A

School Leader Individual Interview Protocol

Name of Interviewee:
Role:
Date:
Time:
Place/Location:

Introduction:

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today about how, as a woman, and specifically, a Black woman, you enact(ed) role model and mentor identities as principal/program leader to your Black male students. I want you to be aware of some key things before we proceed:

1) The purpose of this interview is to explore the ways in which Black women school leaders enact role model and mentor identities for Black boys in all boys of color educational spaces. Your responses will become collected data that will be analyzed and compiled to further understand how Black women might view themselves as role models and mentors to Black boys and live into these identities in such a setting.

2) The information gathered in this interview will analyzed in aggregate and presented in the context of my doctoral dissertation to be reviewed and critiqued by professors advising my study as well as published to add to the body of research on the topic. Findings may be subsequently published or referenced in related research studies, articles, and reports.

3) Individually identifying information related to you and your answers will be kept confidential at all times. Your responses will be anonymous. Still, if at any time you feel uncomfortable answering a question or want to stop the interview process, please let me know. You are not required to answer any questions as your participation in this and any other interview related to this study is strictly voluntary.

4) To accurately capture your responses, the interview will be recorded a number of different ways, for example, using the Zoom videoconferencing platforms recording feature, as well as a digital recorder and my iPhone for back up. It will be transcribed later. Remember that you can stop the interview at any time. After transcription has been completed, you will have the opportunity to review your responses and revise them as you deem necessary to most accurately reflect your intended meaning or any ideas that you want to add.

5) I anticipate that the session will last between 60-75 mins.

6) Do you have any questions we before we begin?

Warm-up:

7) For recording and transcription purposes and so that I can thank you later, please state your first and last name and also the name of your favorite author.

8) How long have you been an administrator at your school?

9) Please tell me about your formal schooling at the elementary middle and high school levels and the college(s) you attended.

10) What was your background prior to joining the organization? Did you fulfill any other roles and responsibilities at your school before becoming a principal/program leader?

Transition

11) Given that so few women lead all-boys schools and/or programs, describe the events that led up to you becoming principal/program director at your school.
    a. What factors went into your decision to becoming principal/program director?

12) Entering the role, did you anticipate resistance from any stakeholders and how so?

Key Questions:

13) An embedded assumption that underlies many all-boys schools and programs is that a man should lead these spaces? How do you perceive such assumptions?

14) One of the main reasons behind this thinking is to provide role models that the boys can look up to and in whom they can see possibilities for themselves.
    a. How might the boys at your school see the same in you?
    b. What about your leadership style may provide them with a sense of what's possible in their immediate or longer-term future?

15) What aspects of your leadership do you believe are most important for your Black male students to view you as a positive role model?

16) What opportunities to mentor your Black boys exist in your role as principal/program leader?

17) Describe the ways that your mentoring relationships with black boys are established?
    a. If they are they structured into your leadership role as principal, how so?
    b. How might you initiate them in an unstructured manner?

c. In what ways are they initiated by the students?
d. How do they develop organically?

Ending Questions

18) What advice do you have for other Black women who may one day find themselves leading all-boys of color educational spaces with significant numbers of Black boys?

19) What advice do you have for men who feel that men should lead all-boys educational spaces, and that Black men should lead such spaces for Black boys?

Wrap up

20) Any final thoughts, reflections, or ideas that address aspects of your leadership that you'd like to share that we haven't discussed?

21) Thank you so much for sharing your insights and so much of yourself. You have articulated the unique leadership experiences of being a Black woman navigating, negotiating, creating, and leading all-boys educational spaces serving Black male students.

Appendix B

Former Student Individual Interview Protocol

Name of Interviewee:
Dates attended:
Date:
Time:
Place/Location:

Introduction:

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today about how you, as a student of a Black woman principal/program leader, perceive her impact as a role model and mentor. I want you to be aware of some key things before we proceed:

1) The purpose of this interview is to explore the ways in which former Black male students of Black women school/program leaders, consider the impact that the women have had on the students as role model and mentors. Your responses will become collected data that will be analyzed and compiled to further understand how Black boys view having Black women school/ program leaders as role models and mentors.

2) The information gathered in this interview will analyzed in aggregate and presented in the context of my doctoral dissertation to be reviewed and critiqued by professors advising my study as well as published to add to the body of research on the topic. Findings may be subsequently published or referenced in related research studies, articles, and reports.

3) Individually identifying information related to you and your answers will be kept confidential at all times. Your responses will be anonymous. Still, if at any time you feel uncomfortable answering a question or want to stop the interview process, please let me know. You are not required to answer any questions as your participation in this and any other interview related to this study is strictly voluntary.

4) To accurately capture your responses, the interview will be recorded a number of different ways, for example, using the Zoom videoconferencing platform's recording feature, as well as a digital recorder and my iPhone for back up. It will be transcribed later. Remember that you can stop the interview at any time. After transcription has been completed, you will have the opportunity to review your responses and revise them as you deem necessary to most accurately reflect your intended meaning or any ideas that you want to add.

5) I anticipate that the session will last between 60-75 mins.

6) Do you have any questions we before we begin?

Warm-up:

7) For recording and transcription purposes and so that I can thank you later, please state your first and last name and also the name of your favorite basketball team.

8) Please tell me the name of the high school(s) you attended?

9) During what years were you a student when Ms./Dr. Williams/Douglas as at your school?

10) What are some highlights that you remember about your time being a student under Ms./Dr. Williams'/Douglas' leadership?
    a. Any stories that you remember as particularly significant?
    b. How about a story about a personal interaction with her?
    c. How do you feel the boys, and particularly the Black boys–related to her?
        i. Please provide some examples to illustrate what you mean.

Transition

11) You may not be aware of this, but it's actually rare for a woman to lead an all-boys school or program, and quite unusual for a Black woman to lead programs with a particular focus on educating and developing Black boys. Describe your feelings, thoughts, or opinion about having a Black woman in charge of your high school/high school program.

12) What do you remember was the sense opinion by your peers about having a Black woman in charge of your high school/high school program, especially your Black male peers?
    a. Describe any negative ideas ever expressed.

Key Questions:

13) What would have been your preference for principal or program leader, a woman or a man? Why or why not?

14) In what ways did you then (or do you still) view Ms./Dr. Williams/Douglas as a role model?
    a. Based on your idea of what a role model is, how did she fit that idea?

15) What about her leadership gave you a sense of what was possible in your immediate or longer-term future? That you could be successful?

16) What aspects of her leadership do you believe were most important for you (and your Black male peers) to view her as a positive role model?

17) What opportunities existed for Ms./Dr. Williams/Douglas to mentor you?

18) What examples of her mentorship for other Black boys were you aware of, possibly having been shared with you by classmates, or a shared experience that you had in a program or class with your peers.

19) Describe the ways that her mentoring of you and/or other black boys was established?
    a. Were they structured as part her leadership role as principal/program leader and how so? An example would be counseling you through a discipline issue or…
    b. In what ways did you seek mentoring guidance from her based on, for example, an academic, artistic, sports, or club interest?
    c. Tell me more?
    d. How do they develop organically

Ending Questions

20) What advice do you have for boys who feel that men should be principals at all-boys schools, and that Black men should lead schools/program for Black boys?

Wrap up

21) Any final thoughts, reflections, or ideas that you want to share that we haven't discussed?

22) Thank you so much for sharing your experiences under Ms./Dr. Williams'/Douglas' leadership! Your insights will be valuable to my research.

Appendix C

Former Student Focus Group Protocol

Name of Focus Group Participants:
Date:
Time:
Place/Location:

Introduction:

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today about how you, as a student of an all-boys school/program with Black woman principal/program leader, perceive her impact as a role model and mentor. I want you to be aware of some key things before we proceed:

1) The purpose of this focus group is to explore collective memories and shared experiences and understandings about having a Black woman school leader of an all-boys educational space serving a significant number of Black male students.

2) Our specific focus will be the impact that the women have had each of you and all of you as role model and mentors. Your responses will become collected data that will be analyzed and compiled to further understand how Black boys view having Black women school/ program leaders as role models and mentors.

3) The information gathered in this interview will analyzed in aggregate and presented in the context of my doctoral dissertation to be reviewed and critiqued by professors advising my study as well as published to add to the body of research on the topic. Findings may be subsequently published or referenced in related research studies, articles, and reports.

4) Individually identifying information related to you and your answers will be kept confidential at all times. Your responses will be anonymous. Still, if at any time you feel uncomfortable answering a question or want to stop the interview process, please let me know. You are not required to answer any questions as your participation in this and any other interview related to this study is strictly voluntary.

5) To accurately capture your responses, the interview will be recorded a number of different ways, for example, using the Zoom videoconferencing platform's recording feature, as well as a digital recorder and my iPhone for back up. It will be transcribed later. Remember that you can stop the interview at any time. After transcription has been completed, you will have the opportunity to review your responses and revise them as you deem necessary to most accurately reflect your intended meaning or any ideas that want to add.

6) I anticipate that the session will last between 75-90 mins.

7) Do you have any questions we before we begin?

Warm-up:

8) For recording and transcription purposes, please state your first and last name.

9) Please tell me again the name of the high school(s) you attended?

10) What are some highlights that you remember about your time being a student under Ms./Dr. Williams'/Douglas' leadership?
    a. Any stories that you remember as particularly significant?
    b. How do you feel the boys, and particularly the Black boys–related to her?
        i. Please provide some examples to illustrate what you mean.

11) What was your background prior to joining the organization? Did you fulfill any other roles and responsibilities at your school before becoming a principal/program leader?

Transition

12) You may not be aware of this, but it's actually rare for a woman to lead an all-boys school or program, and quite unusual for a Black woman to lead programs with a particular focus on educating and developing Black boys. Describe your feelings, thoughts, or opinion about have a Black woman in charge of your high school/high school program.

13) What do you remember was the opinion held by your peers about having a Black woman in charge of your high school/high school program, especially your Black male peers?
    a. Describe any negative ideas ever expressed

Key Questions:

14) Would you have preferred a man as principal/program leader? Why or why not?

15) In what ways did you then (or do you still) view Ms./Dr. Williams'/Douglas' as a role model?
    a. Based on your idea of what a role model is, how did she fit that idea?

16) What about her leadership gave you a sense of what was possible in your immediate or longer-term future or you could be successful?

17) What aspects of her leadership do you believe were most important for you (and your Black male peers) to see her as a positive role model?

18) What opportunities existed for Ms./Dr. Williams'/Douglas' to mentor you?

19) What examples of her mentorship for other Black boys were you aware of, possibly having been shared with you by classmates, or a shared experience that you had in a program or class with your peers.

20) Describe the ways that her mentoring of you and/or other black boys was established?
    a. Were they structured as part her leadership role as principal/program leader and how so? An example would be counseling you through a discipline issue or…
    b. In what ways did you seek mentoring guidance from her based on, for example, an academic, artistic, sports, or club interest?
    c. How did mentoring develop unintentionally for any of you?

Ending Questions

21) What advice do you have for boys who feel that men should be principals at all-boys schools, and that Black men should lead all-boys educational spaces for Black boys?

Wrap up

22) Any final thoughts, reflections, or ideas that you want to share that we haven't discussed?

23) Thank you so much for sharing your experiences under Ms./Dr. Williams'/Douglas' leadership! Your insights will be valuable to my research.

Appendix D

Parents of Former Students Focus Group Protocol

Name of Focus Group Participants:
Date:
Time:
Place/Location:

Introduction:

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today about how you, as a parent of a former student in an all-boys school/program with a Black woman principal/program leader, perceive her impact as a role model and mentor. I want you to be aware of some key things before we proceed:

1) The purpose of this focus group is to explore collective memories and shared experiences and understandings about having a Black woman school leader of an all-boys educational space serving a significant number of Black male students.

2) Our specific focus will be the impact that the women have had on your sons as role model and mentors and each of you as parents with sons in schools/programs that they led. Your responses will become collected data that will be analyzed and compiled to further understand how Black boys and their parent(s) view having Black women school/ program leaders as role models and mentors.

3) The information gathered in this interview will analyzed in aggregate and presented in the context of my doctoral dissertation to be reviewed and critiqued by professors advising my study as well as published to add to the body of research on the topic. Findings may be subsequently published or referenced in related research studies, articles, and reports.

4) Individually identifying information related to you and your answers will be kept confidential at all times. Your responses will be confidential. Still, if at any time you feel uncomfortable answering a question or want to stop the interview process, please let me know. You are not required to answer any questions as your participation in this and any other interview related to this study is strictly voluntary.

5) To accurately capture your responses, the interview will be recorded a number of different ways, for example, using the Zoom videoconferencing platform's recording feature, as well as a digital recorder and my iPhone for back up. It will be transcribed later. Remember that you can stop the interview at any time. After transcription has been completed, you will have the opportunity to review your responses and revise them as you deem necessary to most accurately reflect your intended meaning or any ideas that want to add.

6) I anticipate that the session will last between 75-90 mins.

7) Do you have any questions we before we begin?

Warm-up:

8) For recording and transcription purposes, please state your first and last name.

9) Please tell me again the name of the high school(s) that your son attended?

10) What are some highlights that you remember about your son's experience as a student under _____ 's tutelage?
    a. Any stories that you remember as particularly significant?
    b. How do you feel your son–related to her?
        i. Please provide some examples to illustrate what you mean.
    c. How do you feel the other Black boys related to her (if you have a sense of this)?

Transition

11) What do you consider makes an effective school leader?

12) Do you think women can live up to and into these qualities and if being a woman is a benefit, a disadvantage, or both in doing so?

13) How does being Black impact being an effective school leader?

14) You may not be aware of this, but it's actually rare for a woman to lead an all-boys school or program, and quite unusual for a Black woman to lead programs with a particular focus on educating and developing Black boys. Describe your feelings, thoughts, or opinions–both then and now–about having a Black woman in charge of your high school/high school program.

15) What do you remember was the opinion held by the other parents about having a Black woman in charge of your high school/high school program, especially your fellow Black parents?
    a. Describe any negative ideas ever expressed

Key Questions:

16) Would you have preferred a man as principal/program leader? Why or why not?

17) In what ways did you then (or do you still) view _____ as a role model to your son, if at all?
    a. Based on your idea of what a role model is, how did she fit that idea, nor not?

18) What about her leadership gave you a sense of what was possible for your son's immediate or longer-term future?

19) What aspects of her leadership do you believe were most important for your son (and his Black male peers) to see her as a positive role model?

20) What opportunities do you remember existing for _____ to mentor your son?

21) What examples of her mentorship for your son or other Black boys were you aware of? How did you come to know about these examples:
    a. First-hand observation(s) or experience(s)
    b. As communicated by your son
    c. Other (please explain)

Ending Questions

22) What advice, if any, do you have for parents who feel that men should be principals at all-boys schools, and that Black men should lead all-boys educational spaces for Black boys?

Wrap up

23) Any final thoughts, reflections, or ideas that you want to share that we haven't discussed?

24) Thank you so much for sharing your insights about leadership in general and your specific experiences of a parent whose child was a student under _____'s leadership! Your insights will be valuable to my research.

Appendix E

Document Review Protocol

Type of Document:

□ Flyer/Advertisement □ Correspondence (letter) □ Correspondence (email)

□ Journal Entry (school leader) □ Journal Entry (former student)

□ Web page (current) □ Web page (archived) □ Other _____

Genuine/Authentic:

□ Yes □ No How determined? _____

Authored by:

□ School Leader _____ (specify whom) □ Former Student □ Other

Document Context:

□ Internal □ External

How Accessed:

□ Provided by _____ □ Discovered via _____

Intended Audience (check all that apply):

□ Student(s) □ Staff □ Parents □ Public

Purpose: _____

_____

_____

_____

Notes: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix F

Recruitment Email for School Leader

Hello Educator and School Leader,

I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at UCLA conducting research on how Black women school leaders enact role model and mentor identities to positively impact and influence Black boys' school success. I believe that you are uniquely qualified to provide insights into this topic based on the leadership roles, both formal and informal, you currently occupy or have previously performed at your school(s).

Your participation will inform the research I am conducting for my dissertation related to this topic. Information gathered from you will be analyzed in aggregate and presented in the context of my doctoral dissertation to be reviewed and critiqued by professors advising my study as well as published to add to the body of research on the topic. Findings may be subsequently published or referenced in related research studies, articles, and reports.

Your participation is strictly voluntary. It will consist of an individual interview (either in-person or via Zoom) of approximately 75-90 minutes and possible follow-up Zoom and/or phone interactions during which I will ask you to reflect upon your own leadership experience and influences as you talk about how you believe you impact the students you work with. Additionally, your participation will involve you being observed as you interact with current students focused on mentoring interactions between you and your Black male students within various contexts at the school site.

Your responses will remain strictly confidential. Respondent names are maintained in a highly-secure server that only project staff have access to. This allows us to maintain the confidentiality of all study respondents.

You will have the opportunity to review and edit your responses prior to the study being published and revise them as you deem necessary to most accurately reflect your intended meaning or any ideas that you want to add.

If you have any questions about participating in the research study, please email me at anthonyjackson@ucla.edu or call me at 951-505-6998. I will follow up with you within the next 7 days to confirm your participation.

I appreciate your time and wish you the best as you continue the great work you are doing at your school.

Peace and Respect,

Anthony Jackson
anthonyjackson@ucla.edu

Appendix G

Recruitment Email for Former Student

Hello,

I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership Program at UCLA conducting research on how Black women school leaders enact role model and mentor identities to positively impact and influence Black boys' school success. I believe that you are uniquely qualified to provide insights into this topic based on you being a former student of one of the Black women leaders participating in my study. You were referred to me by <name>, who identified you as having been a student that graduated from the school and/or program that she led.

Your participation will inform the research I am conducting for my dissertation related to this topic. Information gathered from you will be analyzed in aggregate and presented in the context of my doctoral dissertation to be reviewed and critiqued by professors advising my study as well as published to add to the body of research on the topic. Findings may be subsequently published or referenced in related research studies, articles, and reports.

Your participation is strictly voluntary. It will consist of:

1. An individual interview (either in-person or via Zoom) of approximately 60-75 minutes and possible follow-up Zoom and/or phone interactions during which I will ask you to reflect upon your own experience and the influences and the impact that <name> had on you as a student.

2. A focus group involving you and other students who were also former students of <name>. The focus group will take approximately 75 minutes also.

Your responses will remain strictly confidential. Respondent names are maintained in a highly secure server that only project staff have access to. This allows us to maintain the confidentiality of all study respondents.

You will have the opportunity to review and edit your responses prior to the study being published and revise them as you deem necessary to most accurately reflect your intended meaning or any ideas that you want to add.

You will be compensated with a $25 gift card for participating in the interview and other $25 gift card for your involvement in the focus group for a total of $50 in gift cards for approximately two and one-half hours of your time.

If you have any questions about participating in the research study, please email me at anthonyjackson@ucla.edu or call me at 951-505-6998.. I will follow up with you within the next 7 days to confirm your participation.

I appreciate your time and wish you the best.

Peace and Respect,

Anthony Jackson
anthonyjackson@ucla.edu

Appendix H

Study Information Sheet and Oral Consent for School Leaders

University of California, Los Angeles

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Came from a Woman, Game from a Woman:
The Enactment of Role Model and Mentor Identities by Black Women Leading Single-Sex Secondary Educational Spaces to Benefit Black Boys

INTRODUCTION

Anthony Jackson, M.A., from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles is conducting a research study. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are uniquely qualified to provide insights into the research. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT A RESEARCH STUDY?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH BEING DONE?

The purpose of the research study is to contribute to the body of knowledge on how Black women school leaders engage in role model and mentor behaviors to positively impact and influence Black boys' school success.

HOW LONG WILL THE RESEARCH LAST AND WHAT WILL I NEED TO DO?

Participation will take a total of about 75-90 minutes for individual interviews and four hours for observations that will take place over two days.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Participate in an individual interview (either in-person or via Zoom). Interview questions will ask you to explain how you view yourself in past and present leadership roles and the ways that you identify your mentoring of and role modeling for your Black male students.

- Be observed in the context of your regular school leadership role interacting with current Black male students.
- Refer former students to participate in the research study.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS IF I PARTICIPATE?

Minimal risks or discomforts may arise as you reflect on your impact on your Black male students and determine the impact to be counter to or a lesser degree than what you may have determined it to be previously.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS IF I PARTICIPATE?

You may benefit from the study by engaging in structured reflection about if and how your school leadership was of benefit to your Black male students.

The results of the research may contribute to the body of knowledge on how Black women school leaders enact role model and mentor identities to positively impact and influence Black boys' school success.

What other choices do I have if I choose not to participate?

Your alternative to participating in this research study is to not participate.

HOW WILL INFORMATION ABOUT ME AND MY PARTICIPATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The researchers will do their best to make sure that your private information is kept confidential. Information about you will be handled as confidentially as possible, but participating in research may involve a loss of privacy and the potential for a breach in confidentiality. Study data will be physically and electronically secured. As with any use of electronic means to store data, there is a risk of breach of data security.

Use of personal information that can identify you:

Your personal information will remain strictly confidential with respondent names maintained in a coding system on a highly secure server that only project staff have access to. No personally identifiable data will be stored on portable devices (e.g. laptops, PDAs, iPods, external hard drives).

How information about you will be stored:
All data and records will be stored on a secure server using advanced encryption to ensure optimal safeguards against data breaches

People and agencies that will have access to your information:

The research team and authorized UCLA personnel, may have access to study data and records to monitor the study. Research records provided to authorized, non-UCLA personnel will not contain identifiable information about you. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not identify you by name.

Employees of the University may have access to identifiable information as part of routine processing of your information, such as lab work or processing payment. However, University employees are bound by strict rules of confidentiality.

How long information from the study will be kept:

Research data from the study will be maintained for 5 years after completion of the research and the study is closed.

USE OF DATA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Your data, including de-identified data may be kept for use in future research

WILL I BE PAID FOR MY PARTICIPATION?

You will receive a token $100 gift certificate at the completion of your participation in the interviews.

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

The research team:
If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact:

Anthony Jackson
Phone: 951-505-6998
Email: anthonyjackson@ucla.edu

Tyrone Howard, PhD (Faculty Sponsor)
Phone: (310) 267-4824
Email: thoward@gseis.ucla.edu

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS IF I TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Appendix I

Study Information Sheet and Oral Consent for Former Students

University of California, Los Angeles

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Came from a Woman, Game from a Woman:
The Enactment of Role Model and Mentor Identities by Black Women Leading Single-Sex Secondary Educational Spaces to Benefit Black Boys

INTRODUCTION

Anthony Jackson, M.A., from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles is conducting a research study. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are uniquely qualified to provide insights into the research. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT A RESEARCH STUDY?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH BEING DONE?

The purpose of the research study is to contribute to the body of knowledge on how Black women school leaders engage in role model and mentor behaviors to positively impact and influence Black boys' school success.

HOW LONG WILL THE RESEARCH LAST AND WHAT WILL I NEED TO DO?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Participate in an individual interview (either in-person or via Zoom). Interview questions will ask you to explain how you view the leadership of Dr. _____ and her impact as a role-model and mentor to you and your student peers.

- Participate in a focus group involving you and former students of Dr. _____ (either in-person or via Zoom) of approximately 75 minutes and

possible follow-up Zoom and/or phone interaction during which I will ask you to reflect upon your own experience and any influence and/or impact that you feel Dr. _____ had on you as a student.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS IF I PARTICIPATE?

- No anticipated risks or discomforts

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS IF I PARTICIPATE?

You may benefit from the study by engaging in structured reflection in which you recollect if and how your child's former school leader positively impacted your child's school experience.

The results of the research may contribute to the body of knowledge on how Black women school leaders enact role model and mentor identities to positively impact and influence Black boys' school success.

What other choices do I have if I choose not to participate?

Your alternative to participating in this research study is to not participate.

HOW WILL INFORMATION ABOUT ME AND MY PARTICIPATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The researchers will do their best to make sure that your private information is kept confidential. Information about you will be handled as confidentially as possible, but participating in research may involve a loss of privacy and the potential for a breach in confidentiality. Study data will be physically and electronically secured. As with any use of electronic means to store data, there is a risk of breach of data security.

Use of personal information that can identify you:
Your personal information will remain strictly confidential with respondent names maintained in a coding system on a highly secure server that only project staff have access to. No personally identifiable data will be stored on portable devices (e.g. laptops, PDAs, iPods, external hard drives).

How information about you will be stored:
All data and records will be stored on a secure server using advanced encryption to ensure optimal safeguards against data breaches

People and agencies that will have access to your information:

The research team and authorized UCLA personnel may have access to study data and records to monitor the study. Research records provided to authorized, non-UCLA personnel will not contain identifiable information about you. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not identify you by name.

Employees of the University may have access to identifiable information as part of routine processing of your information, such as lab work or processing payment. However, University employees are bound by strict rules of confidentiality.

How long information from the study will be kept:
Research data from the study will be maintained for 5 years after completion of the research and the study is closed.

USE OF DATA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Your data, including de-identified data may be kept for use in future research.

WILL I BE PAID FOR MY PARTICIPATION?

You will receive a token $25 gift certificate for the individual interview and another $25 gift certificate for your participation in the focus group for a total of $50 .

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

The research team:
If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact:

Anthony Jackson
Phone: 951-505-6998
Email: anthonyjackson@ucla.edu

Tyrone Howard, PhD (Faculty Sponsor)
Phone: (310) 267-4824
Email: thoward@gseis.ucla.edu

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS IF I TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.

- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Appendix J

Study Information Sheet and Oral Consent for Parents

University of California, Los Angeles

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Came from a Woman, Game from a Woman:
The Enactment of Role Model and Mentor Identities by Black Women Leading Single-Sex Secondary Educational Spaces to Benefit Black Boys

INTRODUCTION

Anthony Jackson, M.A., from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles is conducting a research study. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are uniquely qualified to provide insights into the research. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT A RESEARCH STUDY?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH BEING DONE?

The purpose of the research study is to contribute to the body of knowledge on how Black women school leaders engage in role model and mentor behaviors to positively impact and influence Black boys' school success.

HOW LONG WILL THE RESEARCH LAST AND WHAT WILL I NEED TO DO?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Participate in a focus group involving you and other parents of former students of Dr. _____ (either in-person or via Zoom) of approximately 75 minutes and possible follow-up Zoom and/or phone interaction during which I will ask you to reflect upon your own experience and any influence and/or impact that you feel Dr. _____ had on your child.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS IF I PARTICIPATE?

- No anticipated risks or discomforts

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS IF I PARTICIPATE?

You may benefit from the study by engaging in structured reflection in which you recollect if and how your child's former school leader positively impacted your child's school experience.

The results of the research may contribute to the body of knowledge on how Black women school leaders enact role model and mentor identities to positively impact and influence Black boys' school success.

What other choices do I have if I choose not to participate?

Your alternative to participating in this research study is to not participate.

HOW WILL INFORMATION ABOUT ME AND MY PARTICIPATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The researchers will do their best to make sure that your private information is kept confidential. Information about you will be handled as confidentially as possible, but participating in research may involve a loss of privacy and the potential for a breach in confidentiality. Study data will be physically and electronically secured. As with any use of electronic means to store data, there is a risk of breach of data security.

Use of personal information that can identify you:
Your personal information will remain strictly confidential with respondent names maintained in a coding system on a highly secure server that only project staff have access to. No personally identifiable data will be stored on portable devices (e.g. laptops, PDAs, iPods, external hard drives).

How information about you will be stored:
All data and records will be stored on a secure server using advanced encryption to ensure optimal safeguards against data breaches

People and agencies that will have access to your information:

The research team and authorized UCLA personnel may have access to study data and records to monitor the study. Research records provided to authorized, non-UCLA personnel will not contain identifiable information about you. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not identify you by name.

Employees of the University may have access to identifiable information as part of routine processing of your information, such as lab work or processing payment. However, University employees are bound by strict rules of confidentiality.

How long information from the study will be kept:
Research data from the study will be maintained for 5 years after completion of the research and the study is closed.

USE OF DATA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Your data, including de-identified data may be kept for use in future research.

WILL I BE PAID FOR MY PARTICIPATION?

You will receive a token $40 gift certificate at the completion of your participation in the focus group.

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

The research team:
If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact:

Anthony Jackson
Phone: 951-505-6998
Email: anthonyjackson@ucla.edu

Tyrone Howard, PhD (Faculty Sponsor)
Phone: (310) 267-4824
Email: thoward@gseis.ucla.edu

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS IF I TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

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