

**Supporting the Educational Success of Black Girls:**

**Mentorship and Empowerment**

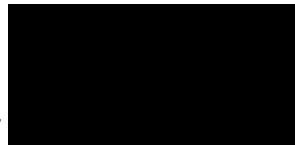
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## **ABSTRACT**

Title: Supporting the Educational Success of Black Girls: Mentorship and Empowerment

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Abstract: A critical issue currently in the United States is the educational success of black girls, which is something that requires attention and action. This thesis examines how mentorship supports the educational outcomes of black girls, and draws on existing literature in the field. When reviewing various studies in the field, it is clear that mentorship programs that are grounded in critical race theory and feminism, and that prioritize the development of identity, and work to empower black girls are most effective to promote positive educational outcomes. This thesis outlines the key factors essential for successful mentorship programs, like the need for culturally responsive or trauma informed practices, inclusive safe spaces, and the need for family and community engagement and support. It goes on to identify challenges that need to be addressed when these mentorship programs are implemented, like funding, systemic racism, and the necessity for ongoing evaluation and editing. The thesis goes on to recommend a structured approach to implementing mentorship programs that are effective. This approach includes the development of clear program objectives, the recruitment of diverse and qualified mentors, the programs needed for training and supporting mentors, and constant assessment to ensure that the program is effective. It also emphasizes how important it is to center voices of Black girls in the design of these programs. Overall, this thesis highlights the need for action to be taken in supporting the educational success of black girls, and emphasizes how critical of a role mentorship can play in achieving this goal. If we prioritize the development of effective, empowering, and inclusive mentorship programs, we ensure that black girls are able to thrive academically far into the future.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Critical Race Theory is a recently popularized interdisciplinary approach to understanding race and racism, and in particular, how those things intersect with other social institutions, and individual's experiences with these institutions. This theory has had a consequential impact on fields such as politics, sociology, and education, the latter of which I'll be focusing on in this thesis. This intersection of race and education highlights how race has been used as a tool of oppression in what's meant to be an institution that levels the playing field in society. Critical race theory intends to place an intersectional lens on it's evaluation of racism. It focuses on the way that race intersects with multiple other identities, like gender and sexuality, to shape experiences of marginalization for individuals.

The intersectionality of Critical Race Theory has influenced the development of other, newer interdisciplinary methods that aim to understand inequality and power, and how the two interplay to affect other aspects of the human experience. The broader social and political context of race and racism in the United States is a salient factor in why I believe it is important to look into how intersectional identities play a part in education, and how mentorship that is aware of how multiple identities interact is needed.

For my thesis, I would like to research the effect that mentorship has on students in middle schools who would typically be underrepresented in higher education.

Specifically, I want to investigate if and how elder mentors increase the mentee's chances of attending university. I am interested in the impact of a mentor as compared to students in the same demographic who don't have mentorship opportunities, and whether the type of mentorship (peer, educational) affects the student differently. The overarching research questions I am attempting to ascertain the answers to are: What percentage of women of color attend university? What is the breakdown in that percentage of women who had mentorship programs at their schools (and how did mentorship improve those chances)? How does this research change the recognized impact of mentorship on young students? What are qualitative ways in which mentors have found that mentoring has improved the ascertained wellbeing and academic standing of their mentees? What methods of mentorship and what specific practices seemed to be most effective in improving the academic standing and commitment of mentees, and which methods seem to be the least effective? Additionally, what frequency of mentorship seems to be the most conducive to mentor/mentee relationship? What frequency of mentorship seems to be most conducive to social and academic improvements for the mentee?

Though there is much research that shows mentoring to be valuable in academic spaces for future educational performance, in public perception, mentoring is seen as a short term solution to behavioral issues, or troubles with schoolwork, rather than something that can have a lasting impact on long term educational opportunities. Because of this, I believe there is value in quantifying and qualitatively assessing what benefits mentorship can bring to mentees, and whether that can have a long lasting

effect on future academic possibilities for the student. Mentorship is often equated to tutoring, and direct schoolwork help. While this can be a facet of mentorship, many mentorship programs, like KIPP and PALs, include mental support, and simply time spent with the mentee, which allows them to be vulnerable and spend time with a positive young adult role model. Tutoring and mentorship should not be conflated as they often are.

I believe research on mentoring for a niche group of students (like girls of color in middle schools) could be valuable to demonstrate the tangible long term impact of mentorship on a select group. Particularly, seeing how mentorship improves outcomes of a demographic that is normally marginalized and much less likely to pursue higher education will more clearly paint the benefits of mentorship programs. Additionally, with new interpretations and evidence on the benefits of mentorship for a group with this demographic can bolster the validity of mentorship programs and encourage their presence in more school systems.

Doing a deeper dive on the existing literature in the field of education, mentorship, and women of color, I found that there was very little about mentorship. While there is a plethora of reading material on female adolescents of color and their educational outcomes, little of it has any focus on mentorship as the experimental method. The closest thing that was available to do with mentorship outcomes in adolescent women of color was a dissertation that focused heavily on a variety of outcomes, particularly attitudes, rather than education and higher education outcomes (Logwood).

In a similar vein, many of the studies that focus on women of color in schools have a primary focus on outcomes that aren't necessarily education related, like belonging, attitudes about community, and parental socialization impact (Burnett). Rather than focusing on education, these studies focus on educational settings and their impact on other aspects of identity. They focus heavily on the identity of "black girlhood" and how a gendered race experience affects education (Nunn).

Some papers just speak about the experiences of girls of color in k-12 schools in a qualitative manner, and talk about how their academic experiences are shaped by their identity, looking at academic habits like studying times, but without any link to mentorship specifically (Neal-Jackson) (Katz). There are many current and important research papers that study the qualitative impact of the environment fostered in schools on black girls' affects, like whether they feel they have safe spaces to connect with their peers (Dolet et al).

Most of this research is qualitative, and involves interviewing and polling these students for their perceived mentorship impacts. In the niche I am looking at, there is no major qualitative or quantitative data that draws further conclusions about the effects of mentorship for the specific demographic I want to look at.

The main takeaway I had from examining current literature within and related to my topic of interest was that while there is an abundance of research on education,



mentorship, and women of color, there is no particular research that links them together. It is becoming increasingly clear that there is a gap in the research in this field about mentorship and its impacts on the educational success of middle school women of color. This is why I am interested in filling this niche and taking a look at the specifics of this idea, especially framed in a city like Austin, which is unique in its position as a liberal hotspot in a conservative state, and its quick development into a major city, which its infrastructure, including its public education system was thoroughly unprepared for. Austin also has remarkably conspicuous gentrification and relatively high diversity, which makes it a unique city in which to focus this research.

For this inquiry, I will be examining multiple types of evidence to make sure my analysis is very thorough. I will likely use many primary sources, like accounts on mentorship. Specifically, I will use accounts like the ones our very own Plan ii KIPP mentors record after every mentorship session. In analyzing a multitude of these, I will be able to paint a clearer picture on how mentors perceive the growth and progress of their mentees. Along with this, it would be useful to reference counselor records, as well as accounts by the process of interviewing various middle school principals to hear about their observations of students in mentorship programs. It would also be useful to hear firsthand observations from teachers and counselors as well. Another useful resource would be mentors and directors from PALs programs at Austin high schools, as getting accounts from mentors who work at a variety of middle schools would yield likely more well rounded results and data.

I will also pore over secondary texts, as there are many research publications about mentorship in various schools and ages of students. There are also many research publications that delve into longitudinal studies that follow the progress of students from k-12 to higher education, and these would provide a source of tangible numerical data and observational commentary to analyze and find patterns in.

I plan to include firsthand accounts of my observations from my experience with mentoring, both in high school and my college career. I am continuing to volunteer at KIPP charter school this year, where I mentor a 7th grader. This direct observation could offer anecdotes with which I could supplement my research findings and tie ideas together. I think many current research publications with the same interests lack personal accounts of mentorship's perceived short term effects, which could be a unique addition that allows my research to have influence and perspectives that can only be found from a first hand account as well as collected evidence.

As for methods of interpretation, I plan to both analyze current literature that deals with mentorship and education. While I've found no literature that directly assesses the niche in which I want to work, I think doing a comparative analysis of overlapping literature could prove to be a useful precursor in doing my own research.

I think it would also be useful to collect and analyze firsthand accounts from mentors, specifically mentors from KIPP middle school mentorship program as well as mentors from local high schools, like Westwood High School and Mcneil High School, where

students mentor as part of the PALs program. I think having a multitude of diverse mentor experiences, especially from different mentorship programs, will offer a more valid conclusion about general mentorship, especially given that each mentorship practice varies very heavily. I think this variance is part of the reason that it is difficult to form thorough and overarching conclusions about mentorship.

I think teacher and administrator accounts would prove to be a valuable supplement to the feedback from mentors, as these would not only provide different perspectives, but also give an account of mentorship from a more zoomed out lens with a unique perspective on how the mentees are affected in the rest of their academic and social endeavors when the mentor is not present. Additionally, administrators may collect data on academic performance that would contribute a more concrete quantitative aspect to the findings.

One more extremely valuable perspective, but probably one of the hardest ones to acquire, would be the firsthand accounts from the mentees themselves. While these accounts may be skewed, they can be analyzed side by side with the corresponding mentor's accounts, allowing for a bigger picture analysis of the mentor/mentee relationship that is supplemented by the dual perspective. Additionally, it would be interesting to see if the mentee perceives the mentorship program and experience differently than the mentor.

The focus of my thesis is to create a framework based on existing data and research that outlines the main challenges that girls of color face in education, and the primary factors in combating these challenges. In my exploration of this topic, I also intend to outline the characteristics that must be deemed most necessary in creating mentorship programs that address these challenges. Finally, I will demarcate the scope of what a “ideal” mentorship program would look like with these characteristics in mind, and define the steps necessary for the implementation of an ideal mentorship program.

## Chapter II: Contextualizing Conversations

My paper includes an analysis of some of the anecdotal evidence I've collected and have access to. I have a few firsthand accounts about mentorship experiences from mentors in the Krewe mentorship program at KIPP Charter school, as well as a select few recorded entries about mentorship that I solicited permission to use from the creators and owners. I collected accounts as well from mentors that participated in the PALs program through their local Austin high schools, and the directors of the PALs program from Westwood High School. Finally, I was able to get the outlook of a few teachers and administrators who had students that were mentees in the PALs program from Canyon Vista Middle School.

## PALs Mentorship Program

One of the first people I reached out to was Claire Burton, who is a Westwood high school alumni. Burton worked as a mentor at Grisham Middle School for two years, and served as a student co-president of PROS, the title of the Westwood High School chapter of PALs, during her senior year in the 2018-2019 academic year. Burton is currently a student at Texas A&M. Burton mentioned that the format of the two year PROS program was helpful, as there was a sense of continuity with her mentee. Additionally, she felt that as a high school student, she felt particularly close with her mentee, as they were closer in age, but she still noticed that her young mentee, who she knew through seventh and eighth grade, still looked up to her and respected her authority.

One major thing that she reflected on was that her mentee, who had commonly had issues during school with not respecting teachers and administrators, was very well behaved with Burton herself. Burton attributes this to the socializing aspect of having a young mentor, which she coins as the “cool big sister effect”. In Burton’s colloquial explanation, she believes that “being slightly older, but still being a kid [herself], made [her] feel much more relatable to [her] mentee”; She noticed that her mentee would try to impress her with her progress, and always loved showing her friends her “cool, older mentor”.

Another co-president of PROS alongside Claire Burton, Alisha Rawal is a current senior at the University of Texas at Austin. She had two mentees at Canyon Vista Middle School. The biggest change which she noticed in one of her mentees throughout the two years she spent with him was the development in his social relationships. She notes that her mentee was particularly shy upon meeting her, so the process of “breaking the ice”, as she calls it, took a matter of months and repeated visits. Once she was able to gain the trust of her mentee, she found that her mentee shared a lot about her social life, and she was able to “witness in real time as he formed new friendships. What was even more rewarding to see was that [she] could also witness these friendships blossom” over their biweekly meetings.

With her other mentee, the relationship was centered more heavily around schoolwork and tutoring, as the mentee was an “obedient and respectful student,” but struggled with course work, and needed the supplementary time to work one on one with a mentor on learning. Rawal thought this was a contrasting relationship, but she also loved giving her mentee the opportunity to flourish with an individual learning style that worked better for her. She noted that her mentee seemed to improve her academic performance significantly from assessment to assessment, and also seemed to grasp the material better after getting that focused attention.

I talked to two students who mentored alongside of me at Canyon Vista Middle School that had slightly different experiences with their mentees. Cecilia Gutierrez, currently a junior at UT Austin, felt that she had trouble connecting with her mentor heavily, as their

personalities and interests “were super different from each other.” While she felt that her mentee was really agreeable, they would often run out of common ground on which to discuss, and she felt that she had to resort to hanging out in pairs with another mentor and mentee to see her mentee open up and interact comfortably.

On the other hand, Ethan Brown, felt that while he and his mentee really enjoyed their time together, much of their time was dedicated to playing football, basketball, or four square as opposed to working on academic work or talking about social lives and interests. While he felt like he “got along really well with [his] mentee, [he] thought [their] connection might have been a little bit shallow.” He was also unsure that he had had a tangible impact on his mentee, but he hoped that his time spent with him was a period where he was able to destress.



## KIPP Austin Mentorship

When speaking to the Krewe mentors who visited KIPP Charter School, there were a range of vastly different experiences, as some were able to meet with their mentees in person, whereas some would have weekly meetings in an online capacity through google video chats instead, as they mentored during the lockdown in the peak of the pandemic.

Julia Mitterer-Claudette mentioned that when she was a part of the KIPP mentorship program, she felt like she had an “easy going” relationship with her mentee. She felt more like a role model figure to her mentee, given that she was a college student when she mentored, and the age gap between mentor and mentee was larger. She also mentioned that she got close to her mentee through more casual activities, like playing different games, and just having different conversations.

Some of the online Krewe mentors mentioned that they had trouble connecting with their mentees in meeting times because of the problems and roadblocks that arose from connecting online with mentees, some of which included just utilizing the technology and being responsive to emails and communication, especially for their young mentees. Many spent time bonding with their mentees with novel approaches, including online games like Scribbl.io, a version of online pictionary. Some people mentioned that it was harder to connect on a deeper level with their mentees when limited to online games, but many found success in connecting to their mentors by treating them like peers, and

opening up to them about the struggles they go through even as college students, which they felt allowed their mentees to feel less isolated and ashamed of their own struggles with school and mental health. The adjustment to lifestyle changes caused by coronavirus seemed to serve as a common ground for many pairs.

PROS and Krewe, both mentorship programs for similarly aged students with similar backgrounds and similar privilege still diverge in many ways from each other. Though both are aimed to aid and provide support and connection for underprivileged or “high risk” students, they do so in different ways. PROS is more academically based, where mentors are expected to help their mentees with school work if necessary, along with bonding with and spending time with them. In contrast, Krewe is focused more heavily on providing company and a listening ear to students, and aiding students with school work and homework is not an expectation of mentors.

In PROS, mentors visit the middle schools during lunch periods two times per week, whereas Krewe maintains weekly morning visits. Mentors are in late high school in PROS, and thus have smaller age gaps with their mentees, whereas Krewe mentors are college students with slightly larger age gaps, and different life experiences than KIPP students, particularly since they are in college.

In both mentorship settings, the mentor seems to serve as an older role model, and honesty and openness from the mentor allows the mentee to feel less isolated in their issues. A key mechanism of this seems to be that mentors sharing their own

experiences removes the stigma around issues, especially those centered in mental health.

## Administrator and Teacher Perspective

Michael Kristan was the director and faculty sponsor of the PROS Chapter at Westwood High School for nearly decades, and he said he has seen a variety of outcomes from the mentorship program, not just for mentees, but for high school mentors as well. He says one of the things that is most important as an effect of the mentorship program, is that mentors come out the other side having learned so many things: “patience, empathy, responsibility, and connection.” He emphasized that a mentorship relationship is important not just because the mentees have a support system, but also because “serving as a role model fuels personal growth in the mentor.” Having close relationships with mentors, he noted that he sees a lot of change in the mentees themselves as they adapt to be better role models.

In terms of the impact of this mentor-mentee relationship on the mentee, Kristan talks about how the mentees are quite diverse in their backgrounds and their struggles. Some have problems with academics, while some have destabilized home lives, trouble socializing and connecting with their peers, and some have a litany of behavioral issues with authority in school. For the mentors, they can “create impacts with these kids by helping them find their passions, aiding them in their learning, and also just being a friend and listening ear for their mentees.”

LaTavya Collins, a seventh grade science teacher at Canyon Vista Middle School, is a favorite of all of her students. She has a few children in her classes that are pulled out

during their lunch periods to spend time with her mentors. As a teacher, she gets to see how students are affected by their time with their mentor, and how that affects the rest of their days in classes. She notes that “students can do better and focus more after,” and describes the mentorship sessions as a “reset period” for mentees.

She also noticed huge academic leaps for some of the students, probably given the one-on-one attention they receive from mentors that they may not receive in public school classroom settings. She says, “Having so many students in my class, I feel responsible for all of them, and I can’t always make time to work with a single student, especially if they aren’t taking the initiative to come to my tutoring. As a teacher, I have to have some boundaries with the kids, and I guess it's easier for these high schoolers to relate to them than I can as a 40-something mom and teacher.”

Nicole Hagerty, a principal at CVMS, had a few main takeaways on the impact of the PROS mentorship program at school. She mentioned that mentors are a positive influence and act as role models to friends of mentees and other peers who are not mentees themselves. She noticed that “every time a mentor would walk into the school, all the students would perk up and be on their best behavior.” Students seemed to have better attitudes towards school and authority after spending time with mentors.

The teacher and administrator perspective is a useful addition to a well rounded analysis, as teachers are able to see the impact of mentorship outside of the period of mentorship itself, especially how mentorship affects extracurriculars and class work.

Additionally, teachers are able to see how mentorship activities impact the mentor, not just the mentee.

These accounts demonstrate the positive impact that mentorship can have on disadvantaged students. By providing support, guidance, and access to valuable resources, mentorship programs can help students of color to improve their academic performance and their dedication to school.

One study published in the Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice found that students of color who had a mentor reported higher levels of engagement in their studies and were more likely to seek out additional academic support and resources. This suggests that mentorship can help students of color to become more proactive and engaged in their own learning, which can ultimately lead to better academic outcomes. While many of these anecdotes don't specifically deal with the academic outcomes associated with mentorship in middle school students, most of the sources I spoke with noted improvements in their mentees attitudes towards their education.

## Chapter III: Reviewing Relevant Literature

Mentorship has been shown to have a significant impact on higher education outcomes for people of color. Mentorship programs have been proven to provide valuable guidance to students of color by helping them to navigate the challenges of higher education and focusing on improving their academic performance.

When looking at previous research done in the spectrum of education, mentorship, and women of color, I found that there was a multitude of literature in each category, though very few investigations that strung all three together, if any. In adolescents of color, I saw that most research about education and higher education outcomes focused around men.

For example, there is a salient research paper about mentorship outcomes for black middle school male students (Gordon et al). This study focuses on how racial identification affects outcomes on standardized test scores and eighth grade GPA, and how culturally informed mentorship reflects on academic achievement. The participants were split into those who got the mentorship program and those who didn't among 61 black male students, and the results were evaluated using surveys about the students' attitudes towards academics and the Connecticut mastery test, which shows performance on math and reading sections. This article examines the impact of mentoring on the academic achievement of urban Black middle-school male students. The study found that mentorship programs can have a positive impact on academic

achievement, particularly in the areas of math and reading. The study also found that the quality of the mentoring relationship, as well as the frequency and duration of mentoring, can influence the effectiveness of the program. This article highlights the potential of mentorship programs to improve the academic achievement of urban Black middle-school male students. The findings suggest that mentoring can help to address some of the educational disparities faced by this population.

Creating an effective mentorship program aligned with its core values is paramount in promoting academic success based on this study report. The current achievement gap between Black versus White pupils combined with disciplinary punishment over-representation amongst black youth leading to prison sentences underscores how such support systems are crucial for minimizing or eradicating these systematic injustices thus creating equal opportunity spaces for urban male middle-schoolers from historically marginalized communities. Hence why mentorship initiatives still remain an essential tool towards shaping positive academic experiences rather than reinforcing negative stereotypes that plague our society today.

New data published in the Journal of Higher Education has confirmed that mentoring programs can have a profound impact on improving college graduation rates for black students. With lower graduation rates historically affecting this demographic its imperative that we prioritize mentorship as a valuable tool for providing personalized guidance towards success. Such efforts not only benefit individual graduates but also foster more equitable economic opportunities.



In examining educational equity matters between income groups' children prominent research from Neuman cuts through assumptions with a renewed focus on "knowledge gaps." Her teams findings note that while providing more resources equally may seem like an easy fix gaps in core both educational and linguistic knowledge persist. To address these issues more effectively they advise targeted interventions on the specific areas where low income students may be lacking, such as vocabulary or social background knowledge. This approach creates a culture of empowering younger students through strategic instruction and resources like early childhood education programs or community led literacy groups. The critical role played by vocabulary and background knowledge in determining academic achievement is highlighted by this article. Consequently interventions focused on bridging the gaps in these areas among low income students are necessary rather than solely providing them with equal resources.

A wealth of research has delved into how mentorship programs affect college students focusing specifically on their benefits for individuals from marginalized communities. One study published in the Journal of College Student Retention found that participation in such initiatives can cultivate greater self assuredness and make collegiate life more fulfilling for people from diverse backgrounds.

The trials faced by first generation college students who identify as people of color come as no surprise. However there is hope for academic success through mentorship

programs. A study featured by the Journal of College Student Development demonstrated that participation in such a program resulted in higher grade point averages and greater persistence among these individuals compared with their non-participating peers.

Mentorship programs have been identified as an effective technique for raising retention rates among students from diverse backgrounds, according to a recent article in the Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement. Students from underrepresented groups are better prepared to handle academic problems and maintain their progress toward graduation by establishing a connection with a helpful mentor. The study's discovery that this strategy benefited students of color in particular highlights the need of funding such programs.

Recent research stresses the importance of mentorship programs as a vital means of fostering personal and professional development for students of color. The Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement published findings suggesting that underrepresented minorities benefit greatly from exposure to experienced mentors who provide opportunities for real world experience and skill building necessary for establishing themselves as leaders within their chosen industries.

Similarly research published by the Journal of Diversity in Higher Education reports on how mentored students report experiencing higher levels of self esteem and efficacy while feeling more connected to their institution than those without mentors.

Notably absent from these studies is data regarding how adolescent black female students might benefit from early stage mentoring or information about its longitudinal impact on higher education outcomes. Critical race theory specialists like Neuman or Crenshaw have made significant contributions toward understanding racial disparities affecting educational equity but haven't examined specifically how mentorship can play a role in facilitating academic success.

Upon conducting thorough research into education, mentorship, and women from diverse backgrounds, I discovered a dearth in literature pertaining specifically to mentorship. Albeit there is an abundance of information about educational outcomes for colored female adolescents - only some featuring references to mentoring – these reported findings typically do not consider academic or higher-level educational consequences (Logwood). The essay "Critical Black feminist mentorship: A review of a middle school and university-sponsored program for adolescent black girls", discusses the impact that sponsor-driven mentoring programs had on young black females given its basis in critical black feminist principles from both institutions.

The main goal was to foster protégé-mentor relationships alongside providing aid in academic areas as well as leadership growth. Through interviewing both participants and personnel involved with the project the article reveals insights regarding implementation processes along with results. Mentorship combined with academic support can be particularly helpful for black adolescent females who often have

distinctive difficulties standing in their way towards succeeding academically or later in life according to this thought provoking article.

This innovative approach with its emphasis on critical black feminist mentorship is notable because it helps to empower these young women encouraging them to find their own voice and identity while challenging the systemic inequalities they encounter. The outcomes of the program that this article highlights is especially significant. By promoting academic success and leadership development among Black girls the program reveals that building a sense of community as well as support among participants can be transformational. It is clear that providing nurturing spaces where Black girls feel valued, empowered and supported is incredibly important.

This thought provoking article highlights the importance of providing mentorship and academic aid to help unlock potential amongst young black females. Empowering them with critical black feminist frameworks is a key strategy towards cultivating future leaders who will shape our society positively. The meticulous focus on program implementation and outcomes serves as a useful blueprint for developing effective mentoring programs tailored toward marginalized communities like black adolescent females. (Logwood)

Diverse gender related experiences within educational institutions are frequently studied; however many such investigations tend towards outcomes that aren't exclusively related to formal schooling- issues such as a sense belonging or communal

attitudes are often explored. By contrast, "When I Think of Black Girls I Think of Opportunities": Black Girls' Identity Development and the Protective Role of Parental Socialization in Educational Settings closely examines how parental socialization impacts the developmental process surrounding identity formation for black adolescent girls towards greater academic success. Drawing on interviews with black adolescent girls alongside their families -as well field observations within an educational context- this article offers insights into ways that parents can offer protection against systemic racism or sexism.

In this reading material we explore how effective parental socialization may benefit Black girls' educational pursuits and self confidence positively. This writings significance stems from its inclusion of both parent child views because Black girls uniquely encounter systemic inequalities. We address how parents can play a role in protecting and guiding their daughters while combating discrimination. As we've found, caregivers' influence on their daughters self worth, academic motivation, and aspirations is extensive – underscoring the importance of active parental involvement.

Mentorship has far reaching benefits for students from diverse backgrounds beyond just the enhancement of academic outcomes. It promotes feelings of inclusivity and camaraderie amongst people who may otherwise feel isolated amidst predominantly white institutions. Building connections with like minded mentors provides the necessary support system needed to succeed in higher education.

The author argues against taken for granted depictions of resilience among Black girls by pointing out specific challenges and vulnerabilities that pose genuine threats to their emotional and mental health. This article draws on detailed interviews with several young women from within this demographic group to explore themes of strength vs sadness alongside perceptions of self identity shaped by larger social narratives.

In light of these realities the essay emphasizes an urgent need for recognizing unique experiences faced by such individuals--and for prioritizing research initiatives aimed at better understanding such nuances in order to provide targeted support where needed most.

An insightful perspective on Black girls' struggles is presented through this article. It highlights how strength and sadness interplay in their lives while underscoring that addressing their distinct challenges is paramount to promoting their overall well-being. The studies cited scrutinize educational settings' impact on other facets of identity rather than just academics alone, specifically focusing on the nuances involved in being a "black girl" (Nunn). Further analysis is provided through qualitative examination of K-12 academic experiences detailing identity's effect in matters such as study habits (Neal-Jackson) (Katz).

Further relevant insights can be found within "Places of freedom or entrapment? Black adolescent girls' school experiences," which scrutinizes how these students' social and cultural contexts affect their educational journey. Navigating high school is hard enough

without added obstacles like racism, sexism or being pigeonholed into stereotypes that negatively affect academic performance or self esteem - but those are precisely what black adolescent girls encounter according to this study.

Through interviews conducted with young women on their experiences at school there emerges a clear picture of just how challenging it can be for them: from feeling out of place because they're not "white enough" or "smart enough " to being subjected to micro aggressions because they're female or black. Yet despite all this adversity there are ways for them to flourish - building strong relationships both inside & outside school; developing a sense of self grounded in pride about who they are; having access to resources and opportunities subjectively equalized rather than perpetuating existing systemic oppressions.

"A Meta Ethnographic Review of the Experiences of African American Girls and Young Women in K–12 Education" highlights an important issue - the unique challenges experienced by Black girls in our education system. Through their meta ethnographic review the authors analyze multiple qualitative studies that shed light on these challenges – including prejudice based on race & gender stereotyping along with limited access & biased curriculum material.

The study calls upon educators & policymakers to implement practical recommendations aimed at creating a culturally responsive environment conducive for Black girls' learning. Amidst the obstacles encountered while studying at K 12 level for

African American females is a negative impact on their academic achievement plus future prospects alongside overall wellbeing. Nonetheless various strengths and resiliencies have been identified including displaying an intense sense of self worth and community pride coupled up with supportive relationships from both family members plus mentors; there is also unwavering dedication towards attaining scholastic excellence.

This article provides readership with a deep analysis shedding light on specific experiences endured by African American females who complete high school education.

The study urges educators plus policy makers to implement practical recommendations aimed towards enhancing support provided for these students, including culturally responsive teaching and curricula; access to mentorship programs plus support networks specifically created for African American females.

Lastly policies aimed at combating systemic biases as well as recurring issues surrounding discrimination must be implemented in order to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment promoting academic success coupled up with overall wellbeing of African American girls and young women within K 12 education.

Conclusively the article highlights an urgent need to address unique challenges encountered by African American female students within the K 12 education system while promoting inclusive learning environments that facilitate both academic excellence coupled up with general well being.



Research papers have focused on the qualitative impact of school environment on Black girls' psychological state positively. One such paper is "So she might know her beauty": Creating safe spaces for Black girls in the middle grades". The article emphasizes creating secure areas where they can thrive as essential for them. It discusses specific challenges unique to black girl students at middle school levels such as cultural stereotypes, racism, sexism that threaten their academic achievements as well as emotional wellbeing.

The research paper employs interviews with black girl students to explore their experiences in navigating such hurdles. It also advocates for supportive settings within schools or community programs that enable them to develop meaningful relationships with peers and mentors while also acquiring skills necessary not just academically but also in life. For safe spaces that uplift both personal growth and academic achievement amongst Black girls, say these writers, it's essential we make them key stakeholders with positions right at the center stage from very early on. Intersectionality involving race as much as gender plus socio-economic status must be taken into account.

A highly insightful piece overall; we're provided with a thorough understanding of what it means for young women from this cohort navigating through middle school years today. We are reminded that uniquely tailored strategies addressing barriers confronted by them must take priority in order for progression at large.

(Dolet et al).

After exploring recent scholarly works related to education, mentorship, and women from diverse backgrounds, I deduced that there has been no specific published study discussed their interplay. In particular, the impact on middle-school girls hailing from minority communities remains overlooked. This realization prompted me towards exploration into this niche area of study. Being a liberal stronghold amidst a conservative environment with marked demographic alterations, Austin proved to be an apt choice for conducting this research.

## Chapter IV: Isolating Important Mechanisms of Mentorship and Education from Existing Literature

Outlining the factors of Positive Mentorship from Literature:

Black female students' education is a pressing concern that merits substantial research study. Many studies underscore the pivotal role of mentorship in improving educational outcomes for Black girls in middle school through higher levels of education. Drawing on several articles this chapter examines the critical components driving effective mentorship for black females' schooling success.

One key determinant of successful mentorship is ensuring secure environments for these young women during their middle grade years. A poignant example is found within "So she might know her beauty": Creating safe spaces for Black girls in the middle grades" emphasizing how crucial it is to create settings where black girls feel validated and supported through identity exploration and creative expression opportunities like student clubs or mentoring programs. Its essential to recognize how parents' involvement affects their daughters' performance in school positively. Emotional support and encouragement can increase motivation levels for young women while modeling a positive attitude toward education enhances academic achievement.

Research highlights the significance of Critical Black Feminist Mentorship programs aimed at improving educational outcomes among black adolescent girls. A review on such a program identifies mentorship grounded in black feminist theory as critical to addressing unique challenges faced by black girls within education systems. A supportive environment encourages leadership development, exploration into identity creation while exploring solutions positively.

Similarly its essential to focus on creating an inclusive atmosphere that recognizes intersectionality in shaping experiences amongst this subgroup as highlighted by "Places of Freedom or Entrapment? Black Adolescent Girls' School Experiences" article. Connecting with peers is also fundamental in building communities that provide comfort for adolescent students.

In "A Meta Ethnographic Review of the Experiences of African American Girls and Young Women in K–12 Education" the importance of eliminating obstacles that prevent Black girls from achieving academic success is emphasized. This could entail advocating for policies and practices geared towards creating fairness inclusivity while confronting challenges like racism, sexism, poverty that hamper academic progress among this demographic. In conclusion: mentorship has a significant role in ensuring better academic outcomes among Black female students. Key components such as offering safe spaces within schools; stimulating parental participation; providing mentorship grounded on black feminist ideals; personalizing education systems around unique requirements experienced by Black girls; along with tackling systemic issues

hindering academic achievement are all essential towards guaranteeing sufficient support structures required for these students' growth both in school environments or beyond them.

Addressing these factors head on opens doors creating more equitable and inclusive education systems where every student can thrive regardless of their race, gender or socioeconomic status. As society progresses at an unprecedented rate, attaining post secondary qualifications plays an increasingly significant role in shaping ones future trajectory.

A university degree brings access to better employment opportunities with higher remuneration prospects as well as avenues for ongoing professional development. Multiple studies also emphasize the correlation between educational attainment and overall quality of life satisfaction levels.

Main Takeaways of Positive Mentorship from Literature:

<p>Critical Black Feminist Mentorship: A Review of a Middle School and University-sponsored Program for Adolescent Black Girls</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The importance of mentorship and academic support for Black adolescent girls, who often face unique challenges and barriers to success in school and beyond.</li><li>2. The potential of critical Black feminist frameworks to promote empowerment, leadership, and success among Black girls.</li><li>3. The significance of creating spaces where Black girls can feel valued, supported, and empowered.</li><li>4. The importance of building a sense of community and support among Black girls to promote academic success and leadership development.</li><li>5. The need for more effective mentorship programs for Black girls and other marginalized populations, and the potential for critical Black feminist frameworks to guide these efforts.</li></ol>
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<p>When I Think of Black Girls, I Think of Opportunities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The importance of centering the voices of Black girls and their parents in discussions of educational equity and success.</li> <li>2. The ways in which systemic racism and sexism can impact the identity development and educational outcomes of Black girls.</li> <li>3. The crucial role that parental socialization can play in providing support, encouragement, and protection to Black girls in educational settings.</li> <li>4. The ways in which parents can shape their daughters' sense of self-worth, academic motivation, and aspirations for the future.</li> <li>5. The need for educational institutions and policymakers to recognize and address the unique challenges and barriers faced by Black girls, and to develop strategies to support and empower them.</li> </ol>
<p>Critical Black Feminist Mentorship: A Review of a Middle School and</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The importance of mentorship and academic support for Black adolescent girls, who often face</li> </ol>

<p>University-sponsored Program for Adolescent Black Girls</p>	<p>unique challenges and barriers to success in school and beyond.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. The potential of critical Black feminist frameworks to promote empowerment, leadership, and success among Black girls.</li><li>3. The significance of creating spaces where Black girls can feel valued, supported, and empowered.</li><li>4. The importance of building a sense of community and support among Black girls to promote academic success and leadership development.</li><li>5. The need for more effective mentorship programs for Black girls and other marginalized populations, and the potential for critical Black feminist frameworks to guide these efforts.</li></ol>
<p>The Knowledge Gap: Implications of Leveling the Playing Field for Low-Income and Middle-Income Children</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Despite efforts to level the playing field in education, there remains a persistent knowledge gap between low-income and middle-income children.</li></ol>



2. The knowledge gap has significant implications for students' academic success, future opportunities, and economic mobility.

3. The causes of the knowledge gap are complex and multifaceted, and include factors such as inadequate resources, limited access to high-quality instruction, and cultural and linguistic barriers.

4. Addressing the knowledge gap requires a multi-faceted approach that includes addressing structural inequalities, improving access to high-quality instruction, and providing targeted support for low-income and middle-income students.

5. More research is needed to better understand the causes and consequences of the knowledge gap, as well as effective strategies for addressing it.

Super-Girl: Strength and  
Sadness in Black Girlhood

1. Black girls face unique challenges and vulnerabilities that can have negative impacts on their mental and emotional well-being.
2. While Black girls are often portrayed as "super-strong" and resilient, a more nuanced and complex understanding of Black girlhood is needed to acknowledge both their strength and resilience, as well as their vulnerabilities and struggles.
3. The experiences of Black girls need to be recognized and addressed, and more research and support is needed to promote their well-being and success.
4. There is a need for greater understanding of the intersectional nature of Black girlhood, and the ways in which race, gender, class, and other factors intersect to shape their experiences.
5. The article highlights the importance of listening to and centering the experiences and voices of Black girls in efforts to promote their well-being and success.

So She Might Know Her  
Beauty": Creating Safe Spaces  
for Black Girls in the Middle  
Grades

1. Black girls face unique challenges in school, including racism, sexism, and cultural stereotypes that can negatively impact their academic achievement and well-being.
2. Creating safe and supportive spaces for Black girls, both within schools and in community-based programs, can provide opportunities for them to build positive relationships with peers and mentors, develop a sense of belonging and identity, and gain the skills and knowledge needed to succeed academically and beyond.
3. The experiences and voices of Black girls should be centered in efforts to create safe spaces and promote their well-being.
4. Intersectionality is important in understanding the experiences of Black girls, and the ways in which race, gender, class, and other factors intersect to shape their experiences.
5. Educators and policymakers should be aware of the unique needs of Black girls and work to create

	<p>safe spaces and provide support to promote their academic success and personal growth.</p>
<p>Places of Freedom or Entrapment? Black Adolescent Girls' School Experiences</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Black adolescent girls face unique challenges in school, including racism, sexism, and cultural stereotypes that can impact their academic achievement and well-being.</li><li>2. Supportive relationships with peers and mentors, as well as a strong sense of identity and belonging, are important factors in helping Black girls navigate these challenges.</li><li>3. The social and cultural context of schools plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of Black adolescent girls, and systemic issues within schools can exacerbate the challenges they face.</li><li>4. Culturally responsive approaches that take into account the diverse experiences and needs of Black girls can help create more supportive and inclusive school environments.</li></ol>

	<p>5. There is a need for greater attention to the experiences and needs of Black adolescent girls in school, and for educators and policymakers to take action to address the challenges they face and promote their academic success and well-being.</p>
<p>A Meta-Ethnographic Review of the Experiences of African American Girls and Young Women in K–12 Education</p>	<p>1. African American girls and young women face unique challenges in K-12 education, including biases and stereotypes based on their race and gender, lack of culturally responsive teaching and curriculum, and limited access to resources and opportunities.</p> <p>2. These challenges can have a negative impact on their academic achievement, well-being, and future success.</p> <p>3. African American girls and young women demonstrate strengths and resiliencies, such as a strong sense of identity and community, supportive relationships with family and mentors, and a commitment to academic success.</p>

4. Culturally responsive teaching and curriculum, mentorship and support networks, and policies and practices that address systemic issues of bias and discrimination are essential to better support African American girls and young women in K-12 education.

5. There is an urgent need to create more inclusive and equitable learning environments that promote the academic success and well-being of African American girls and young women.

## Outlining the Factors of Good Mentorship Based on Meta Analysis:

The intersectionality of being a black woman in America presents many challenges when it comes to education; these include facing racists or sexist biases lacking access to resources and opportunities as well as an irrelevant curriculum. However there are mentorship programs that aim to mitigate these barriers faced by young black women. This article draws from various sources including "Critical Black Feminist Mentorship " "When I Think of Black Girls I Think of Opportunities " and "So She Might Know Her Beauty" - providing insight on the most important factors required for successful mentorship programs aimed at empowering young black women.

For instance any successful program must root itself within a critical race or feminist framework while also generating environments that encourage candid discussions about identity formation while fostering leadership skills to ultimately prepare individuals for societys expectations dictated by race or gender norms. Focusing on developing fulfilling relationships between mentors and mentees holds paramount importance when creating successful mentoring programs for black female students. Mentors should possess both cultural competency as well as an acceptably relatable demeanor that allows them to offer individualized guidance and support. Mutual trust, respect, and shared experiences should be the bedrock of these interactions.

Supporting our stance is "When I Think of Black Girls I Think of Opportunities," which explores how parental socialization shapes self concept and academic success among

black girls. To meet the needs of black female students mentorship programs must prioritize cultural responsiveness by valuing and acknowledging their heritage and experiences. Also creating an inclusive learning environment that celebrates diverse perspectives is essential. The article "Places of Freedom or Entrapment?

Black Adolescent Girls' School Experiences" emphasizes that supporting black female students in building a positive identity is critical to academic success in these already challenging times. With this in mind its important to adopt a feminist and critical race framework that prioritizes developing positive relationships employing academic support mechanisms tailored to these unique challenges faced by black female students.

Educational Qualification: Graduate from a University Program

Intentions: Aligning with Purpose

Rewritten version:

Having gone through a university program myself, I appreciate that achieving one's objective requires alignment. To this end, I'm determined to tailor my writing appropriately in order to fulfill its intentions.



## Chapter V: Challenges and Recommendations

### Challenges

Mentoring black females presents unique challenges due to different factors making it hard for implementation purposes despite its various benefits. In this piece, we shall delve into some of these discouraging factors while suggesting ways to deal with the hurdles as they arise. One major setback involves locating compatible mentors who are not only willing but able also, both capable of offering nurturing guidance as well as supportiveness towards our black female students' progress without undue discrimination or bias regarding understanding what these ladies go through or face daily?

Mentors must hence exhibit cultural competency besides an eagerness for meaningful engagement with their mentees. Accessibility remains another issue since inclusion means allowing all black females equal access opportunities regardless of prevailing circumstances or situations; mentoring programs need a creative design tailored precise enough not only sensitive but accommodating enough too so every student feels uniquely appreciated according to their personal needs, goals and objectives. It is crucial that mentoring programs are designed in collaboration with the black female students to incorporate their experiences and perspectives.

The implementation of successful mentoring initiatives faces significant challenges such as inadequate resources. Without sufficient funding support from institutions and infrastructure investment plus staff-training requirements after program design takes time; this can hinder the effectiveness when evaluating or assessing the program's impact fully.

Mentor programs must serve diverse demographics effectively; however stigma towards help-seeking or participation acts as a barrier for some black female students due to cultural norms such as stereotypes about seeking help being weak or inferior plus limited knowledge about mentoring benefits affecting willingness issues.

Therefore overcoming these difficulties requires several strategic processes: firstly identifying mentors who have previous experience working alongside black females committed-mentors focused on providing culturally appropriate mentoring methods is vital in producing student success rates through combining community organizations' efforts with university/school involvement collaboration opportunities available regionally/nationally/internationally ensuring commitment towards progress secondly integrating black females' feedback into mentoring-program will allow tailoring to their specific needs/experiences.

To ensure that our mentorship initiatives are tailored specifically to the needs of Black female students it is essential that we solicit their insights and experiences from focus groups, surveys or individual interviews. Adequate financing and resources must also be secured which is why collaborations with socially conscious businesses, philanthropic foundations or like minded organizations will be instrumental in bringing our goals to

fruition. Dispelling negative assumptions about mentoring programs within some communities will require strategic outreach efforts focusing on engagement with schools and/ community organizations to highlight past successes as well as promote stories of successful mentoring experiences for young Black females. By addressing these critical concerns strategically we can ensure that the potential benefits of mentorship programs for young black women are maximized.

## Recommendations

Creating a safe space where Black female students can access supportive resources fostering positive identity development while receiving career guidance is essential.

Below are viable options on how a successful mentorship program that incorporates these aspects could be implemented:

1. Establishing a Structured Mentorship Program - A structured Mentorship Program will facilitate consistency in achieving set goals while maintaining accountability measures; this includes having clear guidelines for both Mentors and Mentees covering communication practices- setting up meeting times to accomplish academic tasks with personal growth opportunities.

2. Recruit Suitable Mentors - The quality of Mentors determines whether the Mentorship Program meets its objectives or not; therefore obtaining proficient Mentors should be paramount when starting this initiative- cultural competence is vital during this recruitment process especially concerning challenges unique to Black Female Students with experience in relatable fields like Education or Social Work being desirable.

Nurture Career Development: As well as providing emotional support for mentees within the mentoring program aimed at young black females' mentors are expected to guide them through their career aspirations whilst simultaneously offering academic advice too. This means assistance navigating college applications while analyzing potential sources for financial aid could benefit applicants' chances of success considerably. In

addition mentorship programs should provide tutoring in a range of subjects and engage their students by offering workshops and events related to their area of academic interest. Negative stereotypes and biases often hinder the success of Black female students within school environments.

As a result prioritizing the creation of supportive spaces through mentorship programs is critical for these individuals' overall well being. Engaging in structured activities like regular meetings or community service projects while connecting with like minded peers will foster growth both academically and personally. In summary implementing a mentorship program focused on fostering positive identity development through academic and career guidance while providing a safe space for Black female students is essential for their holistic growth. The impact that qualified mentors could have cannot be understated; similarly important strategies include promoting a positive self image among participants in addition to creating welcoming communal atmospheres conducive to learning. To gauge the efficacy of the program over time requires regular evaluation that accounts for new developments like changes within education systems or broader societal changes.

## Implementation

Mentorship is a crucial factor in the educational success of black female students.

Based on the research reviewed, it is clear that effective mentorship should involve a focus on identity development, a safe and supportive environment, culturally responsive practices, and an emphasis on academic and career aspirations. In this essay, we will outline recommendations for a mentorship program that includes these key factors and how it should be implemented.

1. Recruit mentors: The mentorship program should recruit mentors who are committed to supporting the academic and personal development of black female students.

Mentors should be screened and trained to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to be effective mentors.

2. Identify mentees: Mentees should be identified based on their academic and personal needs. The mentorship program should prioritize students who are at risk of academic failure, have low self-esteem, or are experiencing other challenges.

3. Create mentor-mentee matches: Mentor-mentee matches should be made based on common interests, academic goals, and personal characteristics. The mentorship program should provide opportunities for mentors and mentees to get to know each other before they begin working together.

4. Establish clear goals and expectations: The mentorship program should establish clear goals and expectations for mentors and mentees. Mentors and mentees should develop a plan for achieving academic and personal goals and should establish communication guidelines and meeting frequency.

5. Provide ongoing support and training: The mentorship program should provide ongoing support and training for mentors to ensure they are equipped to support the academic and personal development of black female students. Mentors should have access to resources and training on culturally responsive practices, academic and career development, and other relevant topics.

In conclusion, a mentorship program that incorporates a focus on identity development, a safe and supportive environment, culturally responsive practices, and an emphasis on academic and career aspirations is critical for the success of black female students. Implementing a structured mentorship program that includes the recommendations outlined above can help ensure that black female students receive the support and resources they need to.

## Chapter VI: Conclusion

The primary objective of our research was to examine the significance of mentorship in enhancing the education of African American middle school girls. Our analysis revealed that prioritizing critical Black feminist mentoring practices coupled with culturally responsive teaching methods can create safe spaces where black girls can thrive academically while developing their self esteem and identity.

Nevertheless there are numerous obstacles to implementing such programmes including inadequate funding and institutional support which educators may fiercely oppose. It will be crucial to overcome these obstacles when creating sustainable mentoring programmes aimed at empowering African American middle school girls fully.

This study recommends that mentoring programmes for this demographic prioritize critical Black feminist mentoring practices whilst incorporating cultural responsiveness within a safe space framework while engaging family members from their communities continually. Creating better conditions for Black middle school girls' learning means acknowledging how systemic racism and other structural barriers hold them back.

Solving these broader problems is imperative for achieving long term improvements in their academic performance. Through mentorship initiatives that center around Black girls' unique experiences we open up opportunities for significant positive impacts on both their academics as well as their sense of well being.



By putting in place thoughtful strategies we can work towards building an education system founded on fairness and equality for all pupils.

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