2016

A QUALITITATIVE CASE STUDY EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN THE "CALL ME MISTER" PROGRAM

Stephanie C. Lennon
Virginia Commonwealth University

www.manaraa.com

A QUALITITATIVE CASE STUDY EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN THE "CALL ME MISTER" PROGRAM

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Stephanie Cree Lennon
B.A., University of Virginia, 1998
M.A., University of Virginia, 1998
M.A., Virginia Commonwealth University, 2003

Director: Whitney Newcomb, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Educational Leadership

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
September, 2016

Acknowledgement

This dissertation has been more of a journey than I ever imagined. My plan was to research some literature, interview some men, make some meaning of interviews, and write some words. That plan missed the mark completely. What I learned, and continue to learn, is that this submission is not the end goal. I am not even sure that there is one definable end goal, but I do know the process has matured me as an educator, researcher, and as an empathetic listener who sincerely aspires to make change in the world.

My coursework started years ago with Dr. Kurt Stemhagen. I was certain I was not smart enough to earn a doctorate because I did not understand the word "epistemology" he used repeatedly throughout the first class- and I was too ashamed to ask. I approached him after class intending to tell him that it was nice meeting him, but I was not coming back. Instead, we conversed about how I was here to learn and ask questions; not to know everything upon arrival. I enjoyed several more courses under Dr. Stemhagen. I decided to stay.

A few years into the program, things were getting a bit stale for me. The long drive into VCU and sitting for hours in windowless rooms during statistics (not my strong point!) had taken a toll on my motivation. I was debating that maybe this degree was not the right goal for me. Then Katherine Mansfield, "Dr. Kat," entered the picture and blew me away with her creativity, enthusiasm, and being able to sense exactly what her students needed. We met at museums, restaurants, coffee shops, and parks. Dr. Kat brought life and meaning to

ii

curriculum. Her ability to personalize and push our mental boundaries was exhilarating. So, I decided to stay.

Several years into my studies, I went through a life and career change in a whirlwind- and I again debated my doctorate degree. Dr. David Magill and his wife were friends of friends at the time and they became an inspiration for me. I devoured their blogs and articles on women in society. They became role models from afar. I wanted to be able to write something inspirational as well. So, I decided to stay.

Throughout the entirety of my ups and downs with completing this degree has been one of the most incredibly insightful, intelligent, and inspiring women I have encountered. I use the word "encountered" deliberately because one does not simply "meet" Dr. Whitney Newcomb; one "experiences" Dr. Newcomb. Her keen analytics are perfectly balanced with sincere compassion- and that combination makes her truly remarkable and unique. I held my breath when I asked her to chair my committee- because I knew that I could not do this without her. Thank goodness I stayed- and thank goodness she said yes!

Of course, my children, Audrey and Wyatt, always push me to do more than I think I can to set an example for them. I hope they know their mother has worked hard for this- but it does take a system of support. The distinctive roles Dr. Stemhagen, Dr. Kat, Dr. Magill, and especially Dr. Newcomb have had in my journey now lead me to this submission. This is the beginning of the next chapter for me to use what I have learned, continue to learn more, and apply this to positively impact education. Thank you all for being a part of this chapter.

Table of Contents

v

vi

Abstract

A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN THE "CALL ME MISTER" PROGRAM

Stephanie Cree Lennon, Ph.D.

This case study is a phenomenology to explore the experiences of African American men in the Call Me MISTER program at one university. The purpose of the study is to understand the program components and experiences of these men in the program to identify the neutral, positive, and negative phenomena. These are categorized into the program design, deciding to become a MISTER, experiences within the program, and reactions to the program design.

Qualitative interviews were conducted individually with eight men currently enrolled in the Call Me MISTER program. A qualitative focus group interview was then held for seven of the eight interviewees. The emergent themes from

these interviews were that 1) the admissions design provides motivation for men to join the program 2) the program's financial aid offerings are an incentive to join/stay in the program 3) the cohesion of the group is a dynamic that attracts and retains MISTERs 4) the faculty support contributes to the MISTERs' program satisfaction 5) the coursework design contributes to the MISTERs' program success and 6) the MISTERs credit the Call Me MISTER program with their career path choice. The mission of the Call Me MISTER program is to increase the number of minority men entering the field of education. This goal is accomplished with each Call Me MISTER graduate that enters the field of education.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In many classrooms in the United States, there is a lack of minority male teachers. Currently, sixteen percent of students in public schools are African American males, yet only six percent of teachers share the same heritage (Certain, 2011; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). Less than half of the African American teaching workforce is male, and less than two percent of the teachers in the United States are African American males (Kunjufu, 2012; Certain, 2011; Nelson, 2011). In South Carolina, less than one percent (less than two hundred total) of the elementary teaching force is comprised of African American males (Chmelynski, 2006; Norton, 2005). When one considers gender along with ethnicity, the percentages are even lower. Students' experiences in schools comprise of more than academic and formal curricula-based knowledge alone. What they experience in terms of social exposure, as well as a sense of community and cultural awareness, is equally important (Perkins, 2011; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003). According to the National Center for Education statistics (2011), only fifty-two percent of African American males graduate from high school (as compared to seventy-eight percent of their White counterparts). This low percentage, along with the significant achievement gap between Black

1

and White males, may be the result of the lack of male role models and, in particular, African American male role models, for American students.

Overview

Although there is significant research available on the experiences of African American male students in education (Hartney & Flavin, 2013; Clark, Flower, Walton, Oakley, 2008; Galasssi & Akos, 2007; Cooper & Schleser, 2006; Kafer, 2004; Jencks & Phillips, 1998), there is a dearth of research that examines the policies and programs aimed toward making the profession of teaching more appealing as a career choice for African American men. While studies exist that examine the causes of the shortage of minority male teachers (and what makes these men leave the field of education) (Shorter & Locklear, 2001; Witty, 2001), little research is available that provides information on the impact and success programs aimed at attracting minority males to the profession of teaching have had.

Statement of the Problem

The lack of African American male teachers is detrimental to the U.S. education system for both academic and social reasons. As teachers and administrators try to prepare students for life in a global society that has variety in ethnicity and heritage, the lack of representation of minority males is problematic (Perkins, 2011; Pabon, Andreson, & Kharem, 2011; Chmelynski, 2006, Fenwick, 2001; Goodwin, 2001; Jordan & Cooper, 2001; Shorter & Locklear, 2001). The shortage of African American male educators denies students the opportunity to have minority role models with whom they can have personal relationships. This

2

also may send negative messages about minority males in authority altogether (Perkins, 2011; Chmelynski, 2006; Jackson & Bolden, 2001; Jordan & Cooper, 2001). Since student beliefs and opinions are influenced by their experiences in school, their views can be affected negatively by a lack of exposure to people of all ethnicities in teaching and leadership roles in schools (Pabon, Andreson, & Kharem, 2011; Chmelynski, 2006; Jackson & Bolden, 2001; Jordan & Cooper, 2001).

Academically, the achievement gap between Caucasian and African American students, as well as between male and female students, merits attention from the standpoint that the lowest achieving group (African American males) is also the least represented in education careers (Perkins, 2011; Mabokela & Madsen, 2003; Witty, 2001). Meanwhile, studies have shown that students that feel connected to their learning environment perform better academically (Chmelynski, 2006; Goodwin, 2001). Thus, students need relationships with educators representing all genders and ethnicities for the richest learning environment possible, both socially and academically.

Rationale for the Study

The reasons that African American males choose not to become educators, or to leave the profession after a few years, have been studied for decades (Shorter & Locklear, 2001; Witty, 2001). However, the absence of African American male schoolteachers received increasingly more attention as standards-based achievement became federally mandated in the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (Witty, 2001) and as the achievement gap became more easily

3

www.manaraa.com

identifiable (Jordan & Cooper, 2001). As Schmader and Croft (2011) recognized in their analysis of the underperformance of male students, "exposure to successful role models essentially erodes the stereotypic assumption that one's group lacks confidence in that domain" (p.799). They go on further to cite examples of studies of having female math teachers teach the same course as male math teachers, with findings indicating that the women performed better in the class with the female instructor (Schmader & Croft, 2011; McIntyre, Paulson, & Lord, 2004; Marx & Roman, 2002).   These studies recognize the importance of role models that represent all of the genders and ethnicities present in public school settings. Brian Cummins (2013) of the organization Males in Teaching sums up the benefits for all students to have more males in the classroom as this:

> For many male pupils, their behavior, motivation and academic attainment can potentially be improved by having a male teacher who can empathize with their own particular needs. Females who lack a male influence at home can build a positive relationship with their male teacher which will help them to relate better to the males that they come into contact with outside of schools. It has also been seen in this site that male teachers can at times take a different approach from female teachers in school and this balance can enhance teaching and learning for all pupils. (p.15)

Cummins explains that regardless of student gender, it is critically important for their lifelong social development to be taught by both female and male instructors throughout their years in school.

4

Studies have shown that African American males choose not to go into education for somewhat predictable reasons such as their own negative experiences in public education, low pay, and perceived low prestige (Chmelynski, 2006; Jackson & Bolden, 2001; Witty, 2001). The lack of African American male role models has also been found to dissuade other African American males from entering the profession (Perkins, 2011; Chmelynski, 2006; Jordan & Cooper, 2001). Other noteworthy reasons that African American males decide not to enter the teaching profession include fear of taking standardized certification tests to enter the profession (Goodwin, 2001; Jackson & Bolden, 2001; Witty, 2001) and fear of sexual harassment lawsuits (Chmelynski, 2006). Additionally, studies on African American men that chose to leave the education profession and only a few years found the most common reasons for leaving to be cultural differences in the workplace, a lack of camaraderie, perceived racism, and hyper-visibility (Pabon, Andreson, & Kharem, 2011; Jordan & Cooper, 2001; Witty, 2001).

According to Lewis (2006), African American males that decide to pursue careers in K-12 education do so with an intent to help young people and to contribute to humanity, in addition to viewing teaching as an economically viable option. However, something occurs along the college route and during the first few years of teaching to prevent African American males from completing the degree and/or from remaining in the classroom. Brown and Butty (1999) noted:

The relationship between African American students and African American male teachers is a symbiotic one-that is, the number of African American

5

males who go into teaching is influenced by the number of African American males who attend college, which is in turn influenced by the number of African American high school graduates and so on. Unfortunately, the pipeline that moves African American students from public school to public school teaching is a leaky one. (p.281)

Brown and Butty recognize that the problem is not one that can be fixed by a quick and easy solution. The problem is systemic, deep-rooted and requires complicated solutions. Although the issue of underrepresentation of minorities in education has merited studies from groups such as the Southern Education Foundation and the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, there are critics that continue to claim that this is a non-issue (Jackson & Bolden, 2001). Critics insist that educators are just "educators" and color, gender, and age factors are irrelevant. Yet, when there is a clear underrepresentation of a subgroup that teaches American youth, problems result that have both scholastic and societal impacts (Chmelynski, 2006, Fenwick, 2001; Goodwin, 2001; Jordan & Cooper, 2001; Shorter & Locklear, 2001; Witty, 2001). For this reason, minority recruitment efforts including local, targeted efforts by universities, as well as national programs, have been developed to attract more minority males.

North Carolina and Louisiana, for example, have tested programs that target drawing African American males into the field of education from recruitment beginning in high school and continuing throughout college and beginning teaching positions with supports such as tuition aid, individualized instruction delivery, and personalized scheduling (Minter & Gilliam, 2001;

6

Wilson-Oyelaran, Johnson, Perry-Sheldon, & Vickers, 2001). New York has created campus-based programs to recruit and retain minority male teachers through the Urban Community Teachers Project and Black Male Initiative (Pabon, Anderson, & Kharem, 2011). National efforts like Call Me MISTER (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) have also had some success in creating opportunities and support systems for African American men to enter the profession of teaching(Jones & Jenkins, 2012). The problem remains, however, that even with programs like these, the number of African American men in education continues to decline (Perkins, 2011; Pabon, Andreson, & Kharem, 2011; Chmelynski, 2006).

Significance of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this research study is to understand and make sense of African American males' experiences in the Call Me MISTER program from one university in a southeastern state. It is not the intention of this investigation to analyze the effectiveness of the Call Me MISTER program. Rather, the intent is to understand program participants' experiences with the hope of promoting and advancing any resulting positive impacts. A history of the Call Me MISTER program from its origins at Clemson University is provided as well as a description of the branch that has developed at a southeastern university, (which will be referred to as Magnolia University from here forth). The program itself is described, including purpose, parameters, expectations, and administrative procedures through document analysis and program participant descriptions. Most importantly, the experiences of program participants are analyzed.

7

This qualitative inquiry will be performed in two phases and will answer the following research questions:

1. What historical and other contextual factors led to the development of the Call Me MISTER program?

2. What are the essential components of the Call Me MISTER program?

3. What is the nature of participants' experiences in the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University?

4. What are program participants' perceptions of program impacts?

Organization of Study

The Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University is described and the experiences of program participants collected. The design of the study is a qualitative exploratory interview study based on the parameters and intents of such research as defined by Creswell (1998). Creswell defines qualitative research as:

> an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological
> traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The
> researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports
> detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural
> setting. (p.15)

The qualitative methods in this study include an initial exploration of the Call Me MISTER program in its creation at Clemson University, then, specifically the program that developed at Magnolia University. This descriptive phase includes

8

information available on the Call me MISTER program through public documents, websites, literature, and student statistics.

Interviews were conducted with eight current Call Me MISTER program participants from Magnolia University. These were individual, semi-structured interviews followed by a focus group with the seven of the eight individual interview participants. All interviewees were voluntary participants.

Overview of Study Context

This study gathered information on participants' experiences with the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University. Magnolia University is a four-year, public school with a student population of approximately 4,800 with 4,300 of these students in the undergraduate programs. The student population is comprised of 31% males and 69% females. Magnolia students are 15% minority and 85% Caucasian (Magnolia University, 2012). The university has a lower-than-average four-year completion rate at 42% (national average is 59%) and a slightly higher-than-average first-year college student retention rate at 78.5% (national average is 77.1) (NCES, 2010). Magnolia boasts an Office of Diversity and Inclusion, with the following mission statement:

> The Office of Diversity and Inclusion collaboratively builds an inclusive intercultural campus environment where student learning and development are strengthened by providing transformative educational activities designed to assist in the creation of citizen leader allies who understand and value the importance of diversity in today's global society.

9

Equally important, The Office of Diversity and Inclusion positively influences the social and academic development of students from historically underrepresented populations by providing opportunities for multicultural students to become engaged and involved in organizations, programs, and services intended to meet their specific cultural needs and interests. (Magnolia University, 2012).

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion offers supports to any students in underrepresented populations including faculty advisement, leadership trainings, graduate school guidance, mentorship, financial assistance, and cultural programs and activities. Magnolia also offers a specialized program for minority males interested in pursuing a career in education named "Call Me MISTER." MISTER is also an acronym for "Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role-models."   This program was branched in the late 2000's from Clemson University, where the Call Me MISTER program launched its first program in 2000. Call Me MISTER aims to increase the number of minority males in the teaching profession to serve as educators and role models (Magnolia University, 2012).

Contributions and Intended Audience

The audience for this study includes educational teachers and leaders at all levels including elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions. As the issue of the diminished number of minority males in the teaching profession is systemic, this study is applicable to personnel currently in education at the local, district, state, and national levels. By improving opportunities and supports

10

for minority males to enter the teaching field as a collective audience, administrators can not only increase the quantifiable pool of minority male teachers, but also cultivate the benefits that these teachers bring to the schools. This study will contribute to literature on the experiences of African American males in education as well as their involvement in specialized programs intended to foster their placement in classrooms. Finally, this research will provide an additional qualitative study to the literature in the context of targeted programs' impacts on college students.

Conclusion

The scarcity of African American male teachers in schools impacts all students, regardless of gender or ethnicity. Furthermore, once students enter into society and the workforce, a lack of exposure to minority and/or male role models can create a recurring cycle of a dearth of minority males in the classroom. A potential solution to this cycle is exploring the experiences of participants that complete programs targeted at increasing the presence of minority male teachers in schools. Exploring and understanding the experiences of African American males in the Call Me MISTER program may identify program strengths and weaknesses that can be applied to the particular program studied here and its sister-branches throughout the Call Me MISTER community.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the research that sets the framework for the importance of the presence of African American male educators in schools as well as the impact of recruitment efforts aimed toward increasing African American males in the field of education. As the research shows, one of the strongest predictors of the entrance of African American men into the field of education is having had positive experiences within the education system themselves (Jones & Jenkins, 2012; Chmelynski, 2006; Jackson & Bolden, 2001; Witty, 2001). Thus, it is critical to understand the experiences of African American males in public education from the time they first enroll in schools as students themselves. The first section of the literature review will discuss the performance and experience of male students in public education in general. This includes not only academic indicators, but also external variables that influence students' overall academic performance. The second section specifically targets the findings of research regarding African American student performance in public education, and, in particular, the male African American population. The final section describes programs that are

currently in place to help entice, recruit, and retain African American male and other minority teachers into public education.

Male Experiences in Education

Although males and females are traditionally together in classroom settings in public schools, their experiences with the public education system remain vastly different (Schmader and Croft, 2011**;** Ma, 2008; Van de gaer et al, 2006). The rationale behind the gender difference in experience is somewhat complex in that not only are students treated in distinctively different ways because of their gender, but the outcomes from the ways they are treated also affect academia, attitudes, and expectations (Schmader and Croft, 2011**;** Ma, 2008; Van de gaer et al, 2006; NCES, 2005). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), only twenty-four percent of teachers in public education are male. The same database shows that approximately fifty-percent of the student population in public schools is male. This means that the chance of being taught by someone from the same gender for male students is only twenty-four percent. This also means that there are fewer male role models in the schools, which can make it difficult for male students to find someone to relate to, talk to, and even model themselves after (Clark, et al , 2008). Without a male teaching population that adequately reflects its student population, there is no way to have a balance of adults mentoring the children. This cyclical pattern of gender-based treatment, performance, and expectations has left males at a disadvantage to females in the classroom and less likely to desire to return to the

13

classroom as a career choice (Jones & Jenkins, 2012; Schmader and Croft, 2011; Clark, Flower, Walton, and Oakley, 2008; Ma, 2008; NCES, 2005).

   Stereotype threat . One of the most damaging circumstances for males in public education is the very real possibility of racial stereotype threat. Stereotype threat refers to the risk of confirming or consenting to negative stereotypes about race or ethnicity (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Interestingly, this now widely-recognized term itself was coined by Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson in an experiment that showed African American students consistently performing lower on tests when they were informed pre-testing session that African American students typically do not test well (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Cultural attitudes and stereotypes are another pressure that all students are exposed to, regardless of demographic circumstances. Stereotypes are deeply ingrained in all cultures and start to impact students at a young age in the forms of toys, games, books, mass media, and interactions with others (Ma, 2008). These stereotypes can lead to negative consequences when people's beliefs about themselves are negative, thus impacting their performance on a given assignment (Schmader & Croft, 2011; Ma, 2008). Schmader and Croft call this "stereotype threat" and describe it as the following:

   In academic and organizational domains, performance measures and often used to assess achievement or aptitude. When certain groups of people systematically underperform on such measures, a common interpretation is that the groups differ in inherent ability. However, social psychological research over the past 15 years has documented a

14

phenomenon called stereotype threat whereby subtle situational

reminders of negative stereotypes can stifle the performance of those who

are targeted by them. (p.792)

Schmader and Croft identify underachievement by subgroups based on

perceived expectations of underachievement. What this means for male

students (who have a higher dropout rate than female students, higher instances

of discipline referrals than female students, and lower overall performance in

language arts than female students) (Ma, 2008; Van de gaer et al, 2006; Gorard,

Rees, & Salisbury, 2001; Cole, 1997) is that there is a tendency to live up to

those stereotypes. Male students, according to this theory, begin to view

themselves as dropouts or discipline issues and act accordingly, either by

dropping out or getting themselves kicked out of public schools (Schmader &

Croft, 2011; Ma, 2008). Although males may have a slight edge in the math and

science fields (which is discussed in further detail below), the overall experience

of schooling is one in which male students have had less success as evidenced

by dropout rates, standardized test scores, and grade point averages (Ma, 2008;

Van de gaer et al, 2006; Gorard, Rees, & Salisbury, 2001; Cole, 1997). This

affects both their academic performance and attitudes about schooling negatively

(Schmader & Croft, 2011; Schmader, Johns, and Forbes, 2008). The problem

for males, then, is that the traditional school structure (based on reading, writing,

and sitting still in chairs, for example) is designed so that females have

customarily achieved higher than the males (Schmader & Croft, 2011; Schmader,

Johns, & Forbes, 2008). This stereotype threat that affects male attitudes toward

15

public education obviously carries over into their choice of careers in the future (Jones & Jenkins, 2012; Schmader & Croft, 2011; Schmader, Johns, and Forbes, 2008).

School importance and relevance. The relevance and importance of school to each gender has been shown to vary between males and females in public education. (Clark, Flower, Walton, and Oakley, 2008; NCES, 2005). The National Center for Education Statistics (2005) has found that males do not think that school is as important for their current goals in life and even for their future plans in life as females do. Clark, Flower, Walton and Oakley (2008) summarize these sentiments by stating that the reasons for these trends are "factors such as lack of male role models in schools, cultural attitudes about gender expectations, disinterest in subject matter, lack of organization and planning for the future, learning styles, and the need for physical space and movement" (p. 127). These themes demonstrate the need to reclaim the male population that has lost interest in the current public school system. With the male student population feeling lackluster and disinterested in the current education system, it is critical to pinpoint the rationale for this to improve both motivation, achievement, and their desire to return to the classroom as instructional leaders (Clark, Flower, Walton, Oakley, 2008; Galasssi & Akos, 2007; Kafer, 2004).

Special education. According to the United States Department of Education statistics in 2006, twice the number of male students as female students were identified as in need of special education services regardless of race or ethnicity (Holt, McGrath, & Herring, 2007; NEA, 2007).   In the U.S.

16

Department of Education report (2006), the following statistics regarding males in education were provided:

  • Nearly seventy-five percent of students with specific learning disabilities are male.

  • Seventy-six percent of students receiving special education services under the category of emotionally disturbed are male.

  • More than fifty percent of students receiving speech/language therapy services are male. (p. 9)

As statistics such as these show, the special education referral processes, the identification of students as in need of special services, and even the expected behavior of all of our students results in a majority of male special education students. The overrepresentation of males in the special education system affects placement of students in classrooms (whether self-contained, inclusion, or general education) and can create an imbalance of genders in all different types of learning environments (Holt, McGrath, & Herring, 2007; NEA, 2007). With lower numbers of identified special education students attending universities than students not identified as special education (Holt, McGrath, & Herring, 2007, U.S. Department of Education, 2006), the heavily-male-populated special education students are less likely to go to higher education to complete the degrees necessary to become a teacher.

Discipline referrals. There is a wide body of research that recognizes a discrepancy in discipline patterns between males and females in public education (Bryan et al., 2012; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Wallace et al., 2008;

Gilliam, 2005; Skiba et al., 2002; Brooks, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 2000).

Although the actual numbers vary from study to study, there is a consistent and

statistically significant imbalance in both the numbers of referrals written for

males versus females as well as the punishments that are received; all of which

show that males are more likely to not only receive a referral, but also to receive

a more severe punishment (Bryan et al., 2012; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010;

Wallace et al., 2008; Gilliam, 2005; Skiba et al., 2002; Brooks, Schiraldi, &

Ziedenberg, 2000). The significance of this is the wider body of research that

shows a negative correlation between the number of referrals that a student

receives and overall academic performance including grade point averages,

graduation rate, and standardized test scores (Reyes, 2006; Morrison et al.,

2001). Hence, if more males are getting discipline referrals, their academic

performance suffers as a consequence along with any other punitive measures

that are taken against them. Obviously, expulsion would prevent students from

attending colleges to become school teachers, but moreso, the attitude and

desire to return to the classroom as a teacher are extinguished (Clark, Flower,

Walton, Oakley, 2008; Galasssi & Akos, 2007; Kafer, 2004).

Academic performance. In terms of academic performance as indicated

by standardized test scores, grade point averages, and dropout rates, female

students in public education have an edge on male students throughout their

academic careers (Ma, 2008; Van de gaer et al, 2006; Gorard, Rees, & Salisbury,

2001; Cole, 1997). In terms of standardized testing, females have historically

and currently received higher scores in the reading and language portions of

18

standardized testing (Ma, 2008; Mullis et al, 2003; Van de gaer et al, 2006; Gorard, Rees, & Salisbury, 2001; Cole, 1997). Interestingly, this is a phenomenon that is not just isolated to the United States, but also has been shown to be the case in forty other countries using standardized reading and language arts performance indicators (Ma, 2008). In each of these countries, females at all grade levels outperformed their male counterparts on reading and language testing without much deviation in the results from year to year. Historically, males have proven to score higher in mathematics standardized tests in the United States (Ma, 2008; Mullis et al, 2003; Van de gaer et al, 2006; Gorard, Rees, & Salisbury, 2001; Cole, 1997). Recently, though, there has been a trend of narrowing that achievement gap in that the female scores are improving while the male scores are remaining the same (Ma, 2008; Vandegaer et al, 2006). The females' exemplary reading and language arts scores coupled with increasingly improved performance on math and science standardized tests could be indicative of an academic crisis for the male students (Ma, 2008; Mullis et al, 2003; Van de gaer et al., 2006; Gorard, Rees, & Salisbury, 2001; Cole, 1997). Again, the overall experiences of males in their public school journey is a strong indicator of their desires to become teachers themselves, so poor academic performance likely decreases the amount of African American men willing to enter the teaching profession (Clark, Flower, Walton, Oakley, 2008; Galasssi & Akos, 2007; Kafer, 2004).

External attitudes and expectations. Pressures and belief systems are undoubtedly imposed on all students in school, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or

19

other qualifying factors. The manifestation of these pressures and how each affects the males and females differently could also be impacting academic performance and overall success in public schools (Ma, 2008; Muller, 1998; Parsons et al., 1982). Parental roles, cultural attitudes, peer pressure, and even self-reflection all combine to impact students' feelings, attitudes, and eventually outcomes at school (Ma, 2008; Muller, 1998; Parsons et al., 1982).

Parental involvement and attitudes about academia are unquestionably linked to students' academic performance (Ma, 2008; Van de gaer et al, 2006; Mullis et al, 2003; Gorard, Rees, & Salisbury, 2001; Muller, 1998; Cole, 1997). However, each gender does not necessarily receive equal treatment at home. Muller found "that parents were more likely to be involved in school activities with boys and in home activities with girls; on average, however, parents tended to be more involved with girls. …parents' involvement with boys was more likely to diminish as the children grew older but remained at a more constant level with girls." (p.338). Through this lack of consistent parental involvement, male students are subjected to a lower level of support at home overall than their female counterparts.

In terms of peer pressure and peer expectations, male students are less likely to give or feel pressure academically than females are (Van de gaer et al, 2006). Although competitive in extra-curricular or physical realms, male students have identified showing too much interest in schoolwork, particularly literacy, as feminine or emasculating (Van de gaer et al, 2006; Francis, 2000). This shunning of academia as a type of eustress or positive competition can be

20

damaging for the male student population, to the point of some boys developing an anti-school and anti-academic attitude, which in turn affects their school performance (Van de gaer et al, 2006; Francis, 2000). This potentially harmful subculture of some male students coupled with research that has found females more able to find relevance and meaning in their studies (Van de gaer et al, 2006; Gorard, Rees, & Salisbury, 2001) is problematic in trying to encourage males into the teaching profession. As research has shown, one of the strong indicators for joining the field of teaching is a positive experience in school (Clark, Flower, Walton, Oakley, 2008; Galasssi & Akos, 2007; Kafer, 2004). Without a positive experience in public education, males can become deterred from this profession.

African American Males as Students

Less than two percent of the teacher workforce is African American males. As a result, there are few African American male teachers available as role models for students, especially the sixteen percent of the public school population that consists of African American male students (Kunjufu, 2012; Certain, 2011; Nelson, 2011). The inadequate representation of African American teachers leads to consequences for all students such as not viewing African American males as authority figures or in trusted leadership roles (Perkins, 2011; Pabon, Andreson, & Kharem, 2011; Chmelynski, 2006, Fenwick, 2001; Goodwin, 2001; Jordan & Cooper, 2001; Shorter & Locklear, 2001). For African American male students in particular, the scarcity of role models that share their heritage and gender has also been linked to diminished self-esteem,

21

lower expectations and goals, and reduced academic performance (Chmelynski, 2006; Goodwin, 2001).

Numerous research studies support the fact that America's public school system is anything but a level playing field (McMahon, Keys, Berardi, & Crouch, 2011; Rust, Jackson, Ponterotto, & Blumberg, 2011; Craig, Zhang, Hensel, & Quinn, 2009; Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Cooper & Schleser, 2006; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005). Researchers have studied the impact of students' backgrounds and ethnicities on learning from multiple angles, including the concept of Caucasian hegemony, biased content and content delivery methods , inequitable school practices , and the impact of overall life experiences and culture of different ethnicities (Stewart, 2007 Cooper & Schleser, 2006; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005;). Research indicates that African American students perform lower than White students in reading, math, science, social studies, and English language indicators (McMahon, Keys, Berardi, & Crouch, 2011; Rust, Jackson, Ponterotto, & Blumberg, 2011; Craig, Zhang, Hensel, & Quinn, 2009; Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Cooper & Schleser, 2006; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005). Comparing student performance by ethnicity reveals patterns in which African American student improvement in performance does not help to close the achievement gap between Black and White students (McMahon, Keys, Berardi, & Crouch, 2011; Cooper, 2007; Freedle, 2006). This supports the notion that whatever improvements US schools are making (for students in general in terms of preparing them for assessments and performance indicators) are helping students as a whole, but not necessarily helping the African American student

population to improve its performance as a unique group. The achievement gap might be reduced by altering the delivery of instruction and matching it to student needs, changing student evaluation methods and recognizing bias in standardized testing, eliminating situations of White privilege, or a combination of the above (Craig, Zhang, Hensel, & Quinn, 2009; Cooper & Schleser, 2006; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005). A first step toward eliminating Black/White performance discrepancies is to understand the experiences of African American students in public education.

Institutional racism. Institutional racism, or institutional oppression, is recognized as the pattern of both overt and covert behaviors that create inequities and imbalance for people of a certain race (Jones & Jenkins, 2012). These behaviors, exhibited by social institutions such as banks, courts, school systems, and government organizations, negatively impact that race. Most relevant to this study, perhaps is the history of American public schools denying access to students that were not Caucasian. By this act of institutional racism, non-Caucasian students were not given equal opportunities to learn and contributed to these students not being able to achieve an equal status in society as their Caucasian counterparts (Jones & Jenkins, 2012).

African American students and content. The curriculum content that is delivered to students in US public schools has historically ignored African American contributions (Taliafero & DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Gay, 2005; Waters, 2005). Social studies classes are typically taught from a predominantly White male perspective (Gay, 2005; Waters, 2005). World history and global

explorations are also offered from a predominantly White male perspective. (Gay, 2005; Waters, 2005) One of the ways schools have attempted to integrate an African American viewpoint is through the celebration of Black History Month in February. However, there are conflicting opinions about whether or not this has been a positive influence on African American students and the general populations of students as well. Critics argue that focusing on African Americans for one month a year is not only acknowledging, but accepting that it is acceptable that the remaining eleven months are focused on Caucasian Americans (Hirsch, 2010; Ross, 2006) Given these circumstances, it is not hard to understand how African American students may find difficulty relating to the current content of social studies courses. Furthermore, research points out that minority students may even feel a sense of distrust about certain subjects because the history that is being taught is geared to prove that what is going on now is right. (Ross, 2006; Waters, 2005). By this, Waters implies that history has been rewritten so that no group is blamed or seen in a bad light for past and current inequities. The rationale for letting curriculum content remain as it is, stems from the belief that it is too controversial, sensitive, and politically incorrect to talk about the true roles that different races and ethnicities played throughout American history (Gay, 2005; Waters, 2005)

Not only have specific subjects, like social studies, created a disconnect between African American students and academia, but so has the language, in general, that is used across all subject areas (Craig, Zhang, Hensel & Quinn, 2009; Freedle, 2006). For instance, in science, it is argued that the verbage

24

used in the texts that are adopted for use (as well as examples and experiments and problems portrayed for students to solve) are relevant to White Americans only (Burchinal, etal., 2011). In math, the word problems can be particularly difficult for African American students who may not be able to relate to the examples given due to different life experiences than their Caucasian classmates (Craig, Zhang, Hensel & Quinn, 2009; Cooper & Schleser, 2006). In English, the literature that is selected for study is authored predominantly by White Americans and, thus, creates another divide between African American students and their English content (Burchinal et al., 2011). Without the ability to truly connect to the common core subject areas, it is not surprising that the achievement gap is so prevalent in American schools. This achievement gap is not only problematic for these students while they are in public education. Research shows that without success in the classroom as students, people are unlikely to return to the classroom as teachers (Clark, Flower, Walton, Oakley, 2008; Galasssi & Akos, 2007; Kafer, 2004).

African American students and content delivery. In regards to the delivery of content, research points to teacher roles being as impactful on student achievement as the content itself (McMahon, Keys, Berardi, & Crouch, 2011; Rozansky-Llyod, 2005). Teacher attitudes toward African American students can be potentially damaging if teachers lower the expectations, anticipate behavior issues, or treat African American students in unfair manners. Holding all students to the same high expectations in their studies and behaviors not only

25

improves student achievement, but also improves student attitudes regarding school (McMahon, Keys, Berardi, & Crouch, 2011; Rozansky-Llyod, 2005).

From a teacher delivery viewpoint, making cognizant decisions to include content that is relevant and meaningful to African American students is critical to the students' achievement (Burchinal et al., 2011). This includes cross-curricular awareness such as selecting meaningful literature and social studies lessons, but also delivering science, math, and other courses with language and examples that African American students can relate to. As content has traditionally had a slant toward Caucasian America, without a concerted effort to seek cross-cultural materials, course delivery to African American students could remain disconnected.

As over ninety-four percent of the teacher workforce in public schools in America are not African American, the African American students report feeling a disconnect with a teacher that does not share their same heritage (Certain, 2011; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). With student attitudes playing such a major part in their academic success, it is important for these teachers to genuinely and actively seek rapport in particular with the African American students in order to create an environment where the student feels valued and esteemed. In other terms, by using Maslow's hierarchy of needs model, students cannot problem solve and discover until they feel respected and respect themselves (McLeod, 2013). With the disconnect not only in content but also content delivery, research shows that these negative experiences impact

students' decisions to not enter the field of education for a profession (Clark, Flower, Walton, Oakley, 2008; Galasssi & Akos, 2007; Kafer, 2004).

African American students and testing. Along the same lines as African American students feeling a disconnect with content and content delivery, this divide is also prevalent in assessments (McMahon, Keys, Berardi, & Crouch, 2011; Craig, Zhang, Hensel & Quinn, 2009; Cooper & Schleser, 2006). Due to language differences, African American students may not understand the language or semantics of a question that is not culturally sensitive. Furthermore, in word problems and examples, African American life experiences may be different than that of the assessment author, so relating to the problems is nearly impossible with no frame of reference (Burchinal et al., 2011, Craig, Zhang, Hensel & Quinn, 2009; Cooper & Schleser, 2006). For example, if students are required to work through assessments that use situations, items, and people that are not familiar to the African American students, these students will remain unable to relate to content and will therefore under-perform students who are able to relate to the tested content. These feelings of inadequacy and the concrete evidence of failure in test scores not only affects student attitudes about school, but also affects career choices in that these students are not likely to return to the classroom as teachers themselves (Clark, Flower, Walton, Oakley, 2008; Galasssi & Akos, 2007; Kafer, 2004).

African American students and the achievement gap. The achievement gap refers to the difference in academic performance between any two subsets of students. One of the challenges of the public education system is

27

that there has remained a significant difference in the achievement scores between Caucasian and African American students for decades (Hartney & Flavin, 2013; Cooper & Schleser, 2006; Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Despite efforts in research, remediation, and early-intervention, there still remains a gap between the two subsets of students regardless of the subject area (Hartney & Flavin, 2013; Jencks & Phillips, 1998).

Although there have been exhaustive studies trying to divulge the rationale for this in an effort to combat the achievement gap, the discoveries of why the discrepancy still exists vary greatly depending on the study. Some studies point at the aforementioned conditions of disconnect with content and assessments (Hartney & Flavin, 2013; Bond & Lang, 2012). These researchers believe that if the content and assessments were more easily relatable to the African American students, the scores would improve for this group, thus narrowing (if not closing) the achievement gap. There is another body of research that points to more demographic factors having an impact on the performance of the African American students such as lower probabilities that they come from college-educated parents, lower probabilities that they have educational resources at home, higher probabilities that they are from single-parent homes, and higher probabilities that they are from low-income families (Condron, Tope, Steidl, & Freeman, 2013; Cooper & Schleser, 2006). Each of these factors alone is indicative of a high-risk student in terms of under-achievement (Condron, Tope, Steidl, & Freeman, 2013; Cooper & Schleser, 2006), never mind the fact that many of these factors may be combined for a

28

student, which puts him or her even more at-risk. Not only are these students more likely to drop-out (and therefore not be eligible to become a classroom teacher) (Condron, Tope, Steidl, & Freeman, 2013; Cooper & Schleser, 2006) but they are also less likely to pursue a career in education as their experiences have been so negative (Clark, Flower, Walton, Oakley, 2008; Galasssi & Akos, 2007; Kafer, 2004).

African American students and gateways to higher education. In terms of academic programs that students must follow in order to gain admission to a college or university, there is no one formula to follow. There are, however, indicators of higher education as well as gateways to higher education that are normal precursors to admissions. Some of these are enrollment in gifted or honors programs, enrollment in Advanced Placement classes, parents' attendance in higher education, and even recommendations from teachers (Ford, 2013; Erwin & Worrell, 2012).

There is a significant under-representation of African American students in not only honors and gifted programs, but also in enrollment into Advanced Placement courses (Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Taliafero & DeCuir-Gunby, 2007). Researchers argue that these rigorous courses do not attract or retain African American students for several reasons. One factor leading to the minimal numbers of African Americans in gifted, honors, and Advanced Placement classes is that the students themselves feel alienated in these courses (Taliafero & DeCuir-Gunby, 2007). With predominately white student-counterparts, the African Americans lack a sense of community they feel in classes with more

29

African American students. Furthermore, if these programs require a teacher recommendation, it is argued that teachers may be less likely to even recommend an African-American student to these programs due to a lower expectation for African American students from the teacher (Ford, 2013; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Taliafero & DeCuir-Gunby, 2007)

Another factor in African American students pursuing these courses is their own feelings about their achievements, particularly if their own parents' education ended at high school or before (Ford, 2013). The demographic factors, including parents' levels of education are also indicators of enrollment in the gifted programs (Ford, 2013; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Taliafero & DeCuir-Gunby, 2007). Unfortunately there is a higher probably that African American students do not come form parents that have education past the high school opportunities (Ford, 2013). This same body of research indicates lower instances of having books at home, having educational experiences at home, and being given college-preparedness skills at home, which are all indicators of higher achievement at school (Ford, 2013; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Taliafero & DeCuir-Gunby, 2007). Without the same gateways to higher education as other students, these African American students are less likely to go on to the colleges or universities that would make them eligible for a teaching career (Ford, 2013; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Taliafero & DeCuir-Gunby, 2007).

African American students and educational racism. African American students, as well as all minority students, are vulnerable to biases and prejudices form the exact institutions and individuals that are committed to educate them

30

(Stewart, 2007; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005). Teacher perceptions and peer attitudes affect the African American students' expectations of themselves (Stewart, 2007; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005). Furthermore, teachers and peers (whether subconsciously or not) may subject these African Americans to forms of educational racism. These may include not recommending African American students into rigorous academic programs (International Baccalaureate or Advanced Placement, for example), over-recommending students to special education services, lowering behavioral expectations, and over-referring to administration for discipline issues (Stewart, 2007; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005). This educational racism contributes, then, to a diminishing attitude about school, which impacts career choices against education-based careers (Clark, Flower, Walton, Oakley, 2008; Galasssi & Akos, 2007; Kafer, 2004).

African American students and school discipline. African American students' experiences with school discipline at school vary from that of their white counterparts both in frequency of instances and degree of punishment issued by the school (Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, & Moore-Thomas, 2012; Shirley & Cornell, 2012; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005). Research indicates that African American students experience disproportionately higher referral rates all the way from pre-Kindergarten through the twelfth grade (Skiba et al., 2011; National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). Furthermore, as Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffi, and Moore-Thomas point out (2012), "African American students were more likely to receive office referrals for subjective offenses such as disrespect, excessive noise, threats, and loitering, whereas White students were more likely to receive

31

office referrals for more objective offenses such as smoking, leaving without permission, vandalism, and obscene language" (p.3). This in itself raises questions of perceptions of behavior as the predominately white teacher-force imposes the most subjective referrals to the African American students.

Furthermore, the reaction to these referrals has been found to be more severe for the African American students than that of the white students (Monroe, 2005; Townsend, 2000). Keeping this in mind, this means that the African American student population is spending a disproportionate time out of class in suspensions and even expulsions than the white students. It is unreasonable to think that students that are not receiving the same amount of in-class time could achieve at the same level as the students actually in school. These negative disciplinary experiences contribute to the diminishing number of African American male teachers that care to return to the classroom as teachers (Clark, Flower, Walton, Oakley, 2008; Galasssi & Akos, 2007; Kafer, 2004).

Combatting Underrepresentation of African American Role Models

As less than two percent of the teacher workforce in public education is represented by African American males, programs are emerging across the country to combat this matter. Most of these programs are limited to a single state if not even a single campus (Nelson, 2013). In Trenton, New Jersey, legislation proposal A3195 (as of September 2013) is in abeyance to try to recruit more minority males into education through special licensing procedures (Calefati, 2013). In North Carolina, the Minority Male Mentoring Program (also known as 3MP) targets community college minority males by offering mentorship

32

and resources to transfer to four-year universities to complete teaching degrees (Minority Male, 2012). Larger, urban cities such as Philadelphia, Seattle, and Milwaukee offer different, although similar expedited teacher licensure programs for minority males wanting to transfer into public education (Celis, 1993). These programs tend to sit in isolation without a branching across regional or even state lines, which arguably with teacher licensure issues, could stifle the efforts. Call Me MISTER is a unique program that aims to expand its recruitment efforts of African American males into the classroom by developing branched programs to willing universities that offer degrees in education.

Call Me MISTER Program

The Call Me MISTER program originated at Clemson University, where a now-retired professor, Dr. Tom Parks, decided to create a program to combat the historically low numbers of minority, male students in the school of education. In his research, he discovered that there was a severe imbalance in the ratio of African American male students to African American male teachers. In the late 1990's in South Carolina, less than one percent of the public school teachers were African American males, yet almost twenty percent of the student body was African American males (Norton, 2012). In direct response to Parks' research about the negative consequences of this disproportion, he (along with a group of his Clemson professor colleagues) created a unique program that targets minority males starting in the latter years of high school into the school of education. After a region-wide search for candidates and sponsors, the Call Me MISTER program officially began in the year 2000 at Clemson University. The

33

Clemson Call Me MISTER website (2012) boasts that after a decade, South Carolina has now graduated and placed over eighty African American males in the classroom resulting in a forty percent increase in the number of African American male teachers in South Carolina. The program has also expanded to Florida, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Georgia, and Virginia. The newest state to add a branch is Mississippi, which hosted its first cohort of Call Me MISTER recruits in the fall of 2012 at Jackson State.

Unlike other teacher recruitment efforts like Teaching for Tomorrow (which recruits anyone with an interest in a career in education), Call Me MISTER is catered to a very specific target; minority males. The program components were also designed for this target, which contributes to the program's success. Beginning with the mission statement, the Call Me MISTER program fosters a sense of belonging to a family and devoting one's self to service and community. The vision statement from the Clemson website (2015) states the following:

I am a dedicated Servant Leader who is perpetuating a sorely needed concept - Servant-Leaders as role models in elementary schools. I am devoted to planting seeds of dignity and respect in children and inspiring them to cultivate those seeds producing a crop of unprecedented success. I will teach reading, writing and arithmetic and progress to self-esteem, imagination and determination. Because of my immeasurable promise, not only have I earned your respect, I demand it! A title is only important if ones' character and integrity dictate its use. When you address me, please

34

verbalize my destiny... please do not call me by my first name... call me in reference to my great vision... call me MISTER!

This vision statement is also in perfect alignment with the aforementioned reasons that African American males go into education; helping out youth and contributing to humanity (Lewis, 2006).

Although admission policies are set by individual colleges that host a cohort, there is a common set of criteria for all candidates that include providing letters of recommendation, completing high school or achieving a General Education Development certificate, and completing essays about why they want to join Call Me MISTER and how they see themselves benefitting from the program. The admission policies do not have any published minimum qualifications, such as a grade point average or standardized test score, but rather have more subjective measures like essays and letters of recommendation. This seems to reinforce the Call Me MISTER mission on their website (2015), which states that they strive to, "increase the pool of available teachers from a broader, more diverse background particularly among the State's lowest performing elementary schools." By including candidates that may have lower grades, but could potentially be an excellent teacher, Call Me MISTER pulls from a pool of candidates that is less restrictive than if there were a specific cut-off score.

The Call Me MISTER program is funded through federal and state grants as well as private donations and partnerships according to their website (2015). The donations and partnerships are location-specific so are not split between the

35

cohorts at different locations. The hosting college/university and Call Me MISTER negotiate how the two will work together to fund the instruction and incentives for this program.

The program incentives for candidates, according to the website (2015), are a combination of financial and mentoring supports. There are three specific incentives listed; 1- tuition assistance through loan forgiveness programs for admitted students pursuing approved programs of study in teacher education at participating colleges, 2- an academic support system to help assure their success, and 3- a cohort system for social and cultural support. A further explanation of the tuition assistance is offered on the website (2015), which states:

> All funding that CMM participants receive, as of Fall 2007, is given in the form of loan forgiveness — meaning that participants who complete their education degrees, receive their teaching credentials, and secure a position on the faculty of a South Carolina elementary school will have a certain percentage of their CMM debt forgiven for each year of credible service rendered. Based on available funding, we are providing a total assistance package of approximately $12,000 for academic year 2007-2008.

This combination of not only monetary incentives, but furthermore fostering a sense of community and belonging, addresses some of the deterrents that research has shown for African American males entering the field of education

36

such as lack of camaraderie and perceived low-prestige (Norton, 2012; Perkins, 2011).

As researchers at universities try from all angles to close achievement gaps and learn what is motivating to students, adopting this type of program aligns with the very discoveries these researchers are making regarding the importance of increasing the number of minority males in schools. As Call Me MISTER is not a stand-alone program, it can be adopted under an existing school of education without the process of creating a new track or major (which can be timely and hard to navigate). The Call Me MISTER program works parallel to the student's major, so there is not separate coursework or class requirements. Adopting the program is more like adopting another fraternity in that there may be some requirements for a student to remain active in the program, but these stand independent from coursework and do not affect a student's progress toward graduation. The program, however, offers resources and incentives for the African American male students to enter into a career in education and then stay in that career.

Conclusion

The decline of African American males in the classrooms is not an issue that will fix itself. Research has shown that one of the most common factors for African American males to decide to go into education is having an African American male teacher that acted as a mentor (Chmelynski, 2006; Jordan & Cooper, 2001). It would stand to reason, then that having more minority men in classrooms will bring more minority men into the classroom. Not only does this

37

directly affect the sheer volume of minority teachers, but this positively impacts all of society in creating exposure to authority figures of different races and genders to our youth. Yet unless concerted efforts are made by colleges and universities to adopt programs like Call Me MISTER, there will continue to be a severe and disturbing imbalance between our student composition and our teacher composition in public schools.

38

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methods used to conduct this study. After reiterating the purpose and the research questions that guide inquiry, an explanation of the philosophical foundations are given, followed by theoretical perspective. The data collection methods are then explained with a rationale as to the specific methods that are chosen. My researcher positionality is briefly explained to put in perspective my interests and biases that affect this study based on my own experiences with minority males in education and the Call Me MISTER program.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences and perceptions of participants in the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University. Since the goal is to more fully understand the program itself, how these men felt as they navigated the program, as well as the impact of Call Me MISTER program, a qualitative case study methodology was selected. The following research questions guide inquiry:

1. What historical and other contextual factors led to the development of the Call Me MISTER program?

2. What are the essential components of the Call Me MISTER program?

3. What is the nature of participants' experiences in the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University?

4. What are program participants' perceptions of program impacts?

Philosophical Foundations

The philosophical perspective of constructionism for this study is based on the underlying assumptions of this perspective that meaning is derived from subjective interpretations of their interactions with the world (Crotty, 1998). Instead of starting with a theory, constructivist research develops the theories, patterns, and meanings as they divulge themselves through research (Paul, 2005; Crotty, 1998). Creswell (2008) outlines this perspective as adhering to these three assumptions:

1. Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Qualitative researchers tend to use open-ended questions so that the participants can share their views.

2. Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives—we are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by our culture. Thus, qualitative researchers seek to understand the context or setting of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally. They also interpret what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researcher's own experiences and background.

3. The basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and

40

out of interaction with a human community. The process of

qualitative research is largely inductive, with the inquirer generating

meaning from the data collected in the field. (p.8-9)

In this, Creswell identifies that the research is heavily dependent on interactions

with the participants and that the meanings derived from these interactions are

influenced not by previous and current researcher positionality (addressed

below). The constructivist philosophical perspective is appropriate for this study

as there are no previous theories or patterns guiding the research. These

theories and patterns will emerge as the researcher interacts with the participants.

Theoretical Perspective

Interpretivism, looks for "culturally derived and historically situated

interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 1998: 67).   This is to say that the

theories and patterns that emerge are tied to the researcher's own beliefs,

experiences, and interactions with the world. Within interpretivism itself, different

approaches can be applied to research including symbolic interactionism,

hermeneutics, naturalistic inquiry, realism, and phenomenology (Gray, 2009).

This study is founded on the phenomenological tradition of inquiry. The

intent of the study is to gain insight to the components of the Call Me MISTER

program, and then use this knowledge to inquire about participants' experiences

and personal impacts from the program. The phenomenological perspective is a

good fit for this study in that Creswell (1998) defines that "a phenomenological

study describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals

41

about a concept or the phenomenon. Phenomenologists explore the structures of consciousness in human experiences" (p.51).

Creswell further poses that the term "epoche" is critical as a first step in a phenomenological study. Epoche is defined by Mirriam-Webster as "the methodological attitude of phenomenology in which one refrains from judging whether anything exists or can exist as the first step in the phenomenological recognition, comprehension, and description of sense appearances" (2014). In other words, the researcher, without bias or interpretation, must view the components, programs, and facets of the Call Me MISTER program as they are defined. Creswell (1998) states that "the concept of epoche is central, where the researcher brackets his or her own preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to understand it through the voices of the informants" (p.54). The phenomenon itself (in this study, the Call Me MISTER program) will therefore emerge through the experiences of the participants. As the purpose for phenomenological research is to understand the essence of the participants' experiences, it is critical to know the phenomenon itself without prejudice about the occurrence.

The obvious challenges to phenomenological studies include both researcher bias and participant selection. Of course, every researcher enters a study with a set of beliefs and experiences that will impact the research and question design. Acknowledging these and deliberately striving to remove as much bias as possible is essential for meaningful research. For participant selection, there is the evident issue of finding participants that have experienced

42

the phenomenon. For this phenomenological study, the rosters of Call Me

MISTER participants are necessary in order to conduct the study.

Data Collection

The underlying rationale for selecting qualitative methods can be found in

the pillars of qualitative design as described by Creswell (1998). He writes:

We frame the study within the assumptions and characteristics of the

qualitative approach to research. This includes fundamental

characteristics such as an evolving design, the presentation of multiple

realities, the researcher as an instrument of data collection, and a focus

on participants' views…We use a tradition of inquiry. This means that the

researcher identifies, studies, and employs one or more traditions of

inquiry. (p.21)

According to Creswell, the introduction of numerous perspectives, as well as

recognizing the researcher not just as a tool, but also a viable part of the process,

is imperative. The process of inquiry must, therefore, include as many viewpoints

and participants as possible with the ultimate goal of defining the most

comprehensive and all-inclusive story from multiple perspectives. The various

traditions of inquiry can be mixed (for example, interviews, focus groups, surveys,

etc.) to create a richer base of information than a single method of investigation.

The deliberate selection of qualitative versus quantitative methods began

with the initial research questions that seek to understand experiences, not

experiment with participants or variables themselves. McMillan (2008) explains

that "Qualitative research stresses a phenomenological model in which multiple

43

realities are rooted in the participants' perception. A focus on understanding and meaning is based on verbal narratives and observations rather than numbers" (p.11). The goal of qualitative studies, therefore, differs from quantitative in that the former pursues understanding and capturing natural behaviors and reactions instead of testing theories or predictions. The qualitative study design, techniques, sample, and role of the researcher will also vary from those of the quantitative study to reach this goal.

The approach to this study as a qualitative exploratory interview study was based on the research questions as well as the logistics of investigation. Before explaining the phases of research, it is important to take each component separately ("qualitative," exploratory," and "interview") to explain how it will drive the data collection and phases. As a phenomenological study, the qualitative exploratory interview design is appropriate within the definition of this framework (to seek to understand an experience through the lens of the participants).

A qualitative approach is imperative as the purpose of this study is not to quantify, measure, predict, or even compare the data. The information needed to accomplish this study cannot be controlled or manipulated. The limitations of trying to quantify human emotion (for example, participants rating their satisfaction on a Likert scale) defeat the purpose of gathering a whole picture of the participants' experiences. As McMillan (2008) explains, the qualitative study "emphasizes natural settings, understanding, verbal narratives, and flexible designs" (p.11).

44

The term "exploratory" is intentional in that there is not a known outcome for the study. Instead of an explanatory design, which implies that a rationale for participants' experiences may be necessary, the research findings are completely unknown. While there may be some explanations, this is not the intent of the design. The data collection methods were thoughtfully devised to not guide the outcomes, but, rather, explore the participants' experiences with the Call Me MISTER program.

Phenomenology lends itself mostly to interviews due to the intent of the study being discovery of participants' occurrences and perceptions (McMillan, 2008; Creswell, 1998). As McMillan (2008) explains, "interviews are used to gather information that cannot be obtained from field observations…their purpose is to explain the participants' point of view, how they think and how they interpret and explain their behavior within a given setting" (p.281). Open-ended, verbal exchanges allow for real conversations, clarifying questions, and observation of emotions. By combining individual interviews with a focus-group interview, the methods will allow for both personal and collective responses and experiences.

Researcher Positionality

My interest in this study comes from my own observations and experiences having served over seventeen years in public education. My first teaching assignment in 1997 was at a school that had a minority-majority population of students. These students were predominantly African American. It took only one faculty meeting (seeing all teachers together) to recognize that our staff of ninety percent Caucasian females did not parallel that of our student

population. The same population makeup of students and teachers was also true for four of the five schools where I worked (with the one exception being a school with a very low percentage of any minority students).

Albeit a simple observation at first that the student population was dramatically different from the teacher population, I then began to notice some of the ramifications of this imbalance. There were small things like noticing the minority students choosing to seek out minority teachers for help (even to the point of coming to my room when they could not find my African American colleague and, instead of letting me help, telling me they would rather wait for her to return). I recall at track meets, my co-coach, an African American male, "Mr. Marks," would be on one end of the track and normally I would be on the other. Almost without fail, all of the African American athletes chose to observe with him and the rest were with me.

Around the time No Child Left Behind was imposed on our school in the year 2000, we had to become keenly aware of both gender and race in reporting achievement gaps between subgroups of students. I knew there was an achievement gap in my class with gender, but as the school reports came in, it was apparent that the school as a whole had a significant achievement gap with not only between genders (females were achieving higher than males), but also between African Americans and Caucasians (African Americans were achieving lower than Caucasians). These data lead to a lengthy conversation with my coaching friend on the way to a track meet in 2002. I suppose it should have

been evident to me, but I needed Mr. Marks to point out the obvious in order to see it.

Mr. Marks asked me how many African American male teachers there were on-staff for our student population of 1700. The answer was "one"- only Mr. Marks. Then he asked me how many of our students were African American males. With some quick estimation from our last school report card, we agreed that there were about 600 students that were African American males. I started to argue that you do not have to be the same race or gender as someone to learn from them as my best high school teacher was lady from India that was a brilliant teacher. Mr. Marks was quick to point out, though that the majority of my experiences in school were from females with my same skin color.

Mr. Marks noted that my whole life I have been surrounded by successful role models and professionals who look just like me, but life was not at all the same for him. He commented that until high school, the only African American male he saw daily other than his father was the school janitor. He mentioned that many of our students did not even have a father that lived at home as they were from single-parent homes or living with grandparents. Mr. Marks recalled when he was hired (the same year as me) there were four other African American male teachers. Three left the profession of education and one transferred to one of the inner-city schools. When I pushed him about this, he said that it is extremely difficult for reasons I could not understand to be an African American male teacher. I cannot recall his entire list of reasons, but they included feeling isolated,

stereotyped, and even emasculated (not being able to provide for his family in the way he wanted to).

The conversation was pivotal for me as a researcher. Throughout my courses and papers, if there was an angle to get to talk to Mr. Marks and other African American male educators (and even ex-educators) more about their experiences, I made sure to take advantage of the opportunity. During my externship phase of coursework, I was afforded the opportunity to work with the Call Me MISTER program as a research assistant to the program head. My experiences throughout my own research as well as with the young men I met during my externship have directly influenced my decision to further research the experiences of program attendees.

Sequence

Phase one: Understanding the History, Context, and Essential Elements of the Call Me MISTER Program

The goal of the first phase of this study was to gather information on the Call Me MISTER program in a college town at Magnolia University. This information was used to design the interview questions for phase two (individual interviews) and phase three (focus-group interview) of this study.

Rationale and design

Although I had a basic understanding of the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University in terms of program components, I lacked sufficient data in terms of specific processes and procedures that were necessary to make the research more meaningful. By attaining the descriptive data and documentation,

48

the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University is able to be conveyed in a more robust and holistic context. This information is necessary to not only describe the program all-inclusively, but also give a framework and background for participants' responses.

Administration procedures

Through the public records available at Magnolia University, the Call Me MISTER website, Call Me MISTER faculty, and Call Me MISTER publications I gathered the following information:

1- The mission statement of Call Me MISTER

2- The vision statements for Call Me MISTER

3- The philosophy of Call Me MISTER

4- Application process for entry into the program at Magnolia University

5- Initiatives within the program at Magnolia University

6- Faculty and administrative staffing at Magnolia University

7- General student data at Magnolia University

Although repeatedly requesting the following information via email and in-person, I was not allowed access to the quantitative data I requested, including:

1- Enrollment in Call Me MISTER at Magnolia University by year

2- Graduation from Call Me MISTER at Magnolia University by year

3- Placements in schools from Call Me MISTER at Magnolia University by year

4- Post-graduate follow-up from Call Me MISTER at Magnolia University by year

49

Phase two: Understanding Participants' Experiences and Perceptions at Magnolia University

Individual interviews

Rationale and design

The goal of the individual interviews was to gain insight of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and occurrences in the Call Me MISTER program without the potential for interference from outside influences (peers and faculty, for example). These individual interviews were semi-structured and conducted in person. As Mitchell and Jolley (2007) note:

> the interview buys you additional interaction with the participant. This additional interaction lets you clarify questions that the respondent's don't understand and lets you follow up on responses you do not understand or did not expect- a tremendous asset in exploratory studies in which you have not yet identified all the important variables. The additional personal interaction may also increase your response rate. (p.220).

By selecting a purposeful sample of males that are currently enrolled in the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University, this ensured that each participant has experienced the phenomenon necessary for a meaningful interview.

The semi-structured interview format allowed for the interaction to continue momentum without the confines of a strict agenda. The interview questions in this phase (Appendix B) were open-ended and elaborated on with follow-up questions and clarifications. All interviews were recorded with permission of the participants.

50

Administration procedures

Participants were contacted via email (Appendix A) from a list of current participants of the Call Me MISTER program provided by the current chapter president at Magnolia University, who also is a participant in the study. Interviews were conducted at times and locations determined by and at the convenience of the respondents. At the interview, participants were read a description of the purpose of the study as well as reviewed their consent. The interview questions (Appendix B) were read to the participant while their answers were recorded electronically and through field notes. These recordings were transcribed later by the researcher. These transcriptions were then coded by the researcher to allow patterns to emerge for inclusion in the Findings section. Follow-up meetings and calls for revisions or omissions were honored for each participant regarding the transcript contents. Participants were asked if they would like to be a part of a small focus group in the future and, if so, for some potentially available times. All of the names in the Findings section are changed to protect the identity of the participants.

Focus groups

Rationale and design

The addition of a focus group to this study provided an extra layer of depth. As all participants have experienced the same phenomenon and participated in an individual interview, their personal accounts were recorded. The focus group allowed for participants to collectively respond to questions regarding their shared phenomenon. McMillan (2007) states that focus groups are "designed to

51

promote interaction among the individuals and lead to a richer understanding of whatever is being studied" (p.282). The purpose of this multi-person, semi-structured interview was to record the experiences of the participants through their interactions and recollections in a small-group setting. This delivered a collective pool of experiences and perspectives to the research data.

Administration procedures

Participants were asked in person during the individual interviews if they would like to be included in a Call Me MISTER reunion focus group. All participants agreed and were contacted via email (Appendix C) informing them of the pre-determined time and location (determined from responses at individual interviews to maximize attendance). Seven of the eight participants were able to attend this focus group. At the focus group interview, again, participants were read a description of the purpose of the study as well as reviewed their consent. The interview questions (Appendix D) were read to the group while their answers were recorded electronically and through field notes. These recordings were transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were reviewed and coded for analysis in the Findings section. Follow-up meetings and calls for revisions or omissions were honored for each participant regarding the transcript contents. All names in the Findings section are changed to protect the identity of participants.

Limitations

Limitations for this study are the acknowledged set of facts that may or may not bias the research. Due to the study design, the limitations for this study were as follows:

1. Few participants impacts the findings in that opinions and experiences may be excluded.

2. Due to the limited time some participants have been in the program, there may be incomplete data.

3. Comfort level with the interview questions and topic may have limited the study results.

4. Personal interest and experience of the researcher may have caused a possible bias.

5. With a small sample size, the experiences of the participants may not have been the typical experiences for program participants.

Conclusion

To properly understand the experiences and viewpoints of the Call Me MISTER program participants at Magnolia University, it is imperative to collect program data, individual reactions, and thoughts that arise when participants are addressed as a unit. For these reasons, a phenomenological approach through a qualitative exploratory interview process provided the necessary data to conduct this research. As the methods above allowed for multiple perspectives along with an explanation of the program itself, this provided for broad and inclusive findings regarding student experiences with the Magnolia University Call Me MISTER program.

Chapter 4: Findings

Historical Background of Magnolia Call Me MISTER

Although Call Me MISTER program originated at Clemson University in the year 2000 as the innovation of visionary educator, Dr. Tom Parks. The branching of this program to Magnolia University has particular significance considering the history of education in the immediate area. To fully understand the specific placement of the Magnolia program, the history of education nationally must be considered, starting with an important court case, Plessy versus Ferguson. In 1896, the Supreme Court declared that schools could be "separate but equal." Several years later, in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded by the first African American graduate of Harvard, W. E. B. DuBois (Virginia Historical Society, 2016). Virginia schools were segregated with gross inequalities between the funding and resources that went into white schools versus black schools.

The NAACP stepped in to take a case for integrating schools, which was brought to the Supreme Court once consolidated with other similar cases. The Supreme Court unanimously overturned Plessy Versus Ferguson in 1954 with Brown vs Board of Education and declared that integration must happen in

54

schools with "all deliberate speed." (Virginia Historical Society, 2016). Then, in 1959, Virginia government made school attendance optional, to be determined by county or city government. Instead of operating integrated schools, Prince Edward County closed its entire school system on May 1, 1959 (Virginia Historical Society, 2016). White students attended private institutions funded with tuition grants while black students had to make their own educational provisions for the next five years (Virginia Historical Society, 2016). In 1964, the Supreme Court outlawed the tuition grants with Griffin vs. County School Board of Prince Edward County. Prince Edward Schools re-opened as integrated schools. This did little to truly provide equality and integration for the students, though, as the white students continued to attend private academies and the black students were left with a five-year gap in their schooling (Virginia Historical Society, 2016).

Magnolia University's proximity to where these historical decisions impacted the population makes it a compelling choice to branch out a program like Call Me MISTER as there is a history of extreme institutional racism nearby. The branch of Call Me MISTER at Magnolia was not arbitrarily decided upon by the Clemson visionaries, but rather was grown out of its own resources and fueled by dedicated visionaries at the school. As described by Roy Jones and Aretta Jenkins (Clemson Call Me MISTER administration):

> Our phone rings regularly with callers describing the same problem. They
> tell us they have heard about us and would like to see a Call Me MISTER
> program in their area. They have seen our success, and they do not want

to reinvent the wheel. That idea gets the conversation started, but those

who come to us must also be able to bring resources to the table. At this

point, we do not have a national source of support for expansion. (p.136)

It is not surprising that in an area like where Magnolia University is located, this

type of initiative would take a stronghold and garner the support and resources it

needs to exist.

Mission, Vision, and Philosophy

The decision for men to become a MISTER is, of course, a personal one

and is best understood by recognizing the Mission Statement found on the

Magnolia University website (2016), which reads:

The mission of the Call Me MISTER (Men Instructing Students Toward

Effective Role Models) National Initiative is to increase the pool of

available teachers from a broader, more diverse background, particularly

among the State's lowest performing elementary schools. The program is

open to all students who desire to pursue education. Due to the low

number of males who choose teaching as a profession, especially African-

American males, the program is critical for providing much needed role

models for young students.

As the objective for the program is to grow the number of minority men in the

field of teaching, an interest in a career in education is a prerequisite in terms of

candidates' mindsets.

The vision statement from the Magnolia website, with the line separations

and capitalization directly copied (2016) reads as following:

56

From the time I was created, I was made to be a LEADER.

Since the day I was born, I have been a man of influence.

I am a LEADER because of what's inside of me.

I am on the path to my calling because I have vision;

I am focused;

I know my history and

I am prepared to serve.

So when you address me, do not minimize my destiny, but please, please

celebrate my GREAT CALLING!

This vision statement is not only posted on their website, but is also recited by the MISTERs at the beginning of each of their meetings. Explained further in the "A 'calling'" section, the vision statement addresses that candidates be aware that they are entering a program of service, leadership and influence.

The philosophy of the Magnolia Call Me MISTER program from the website (2016) is a seven-point bulleted list that reads as follows:

- We strive for full development of each teacher, drawing from educational resources within and beyond the classroom walls.

- We encourage men of more diverse backgrounds to engage and accept the challenges of encouraging students of all races to strive for personal excellence.

- We promote the training of skilled and caring faculty who will stimulate, guide and challenge their students to become leaders and positive role models in their respective communities.

57

- We support committed, motivated students who desire to make a difference in the lives of young people.

- We support men who value energy, enthusiasm, determination, imagination, curiosity, creativity and a sense of humor.

- We hold respect, responsibility, and support as core values of the MISTER community.

- We value contributions to society by undertaking opportunities of outreach and service to others.

The first philosophy addresses the type of training the program aspires to give each student in the program. The second, fourth, and fifth philosophies describe the type of student the Call Me MISTER ideally supports. The third philosophy states the desired outcome of the program. The sixth and seventh philosophies show the values the Call Me MISTER program most emphasizes.

The mission statement, values, and philosophies of organizations serve to create a framework for the program experiences from candidacy past graduation. Whereas a mission statement serves to show a purpose, the vision statement differs in that it demonstrates the future goals for the organizations or individuals involved; in this case, the Call Me MISTER graduates become educational leaders. The philosophies serve to demonstrate values of the program.

The Application Process

Once an aspiring MISTER has decided to apply to the program, the process for applying is as follows according to the Magnolia University website:

58

1-Apply for and be accepted into one of the participating colleges or universities at which the degree and teaching certificate will be earned.

2- Complete the Call Me MISTER online application.

3- Submit the following items:

High School diploma and final transcript or General Education

Development (GED) certificate

Two letters of recommendation:

one (1) from a teacher, guidance counselor, or principal at the high

school from which the diploma is earned

one (1) from a person of the student's choice who can express the

student's involvement in the community and/or potential for entering

the teaching profession.

4-Compose an essay entitled, "Why I Want To Teach," which will address the student's motivation for entering the teaching profession and the contributions he hopes to make to the profession and to the community as a teacher.

5-Compose an essay entitled "How do you believe the Call Me MISTER program will benefit you as a student?"

Looking at these requirements separately, the first is that applicants must already be admitted to an institution that has a Call Me MISTER chapter. At Magnolia University, the mid-range admissions scores for freshman are a grade point average of 3.07 – 3.61, SAT scores between 930-1080, and ACT scores

59

between 19-24, according to their website. These scores will obviously vary from school to school where chapters of Call Me MISTER are available.

The online application is a straightforward listing of demographic information (including name, address, and contact information) along with a brief listing of high school and college experiences (if applicable). This information includes school location, SAT scores, graduation year, honors courses, and extracurricular activities. The two required essays are also part of the online application process. Although letters of recommendation and transcripts are a fairly standard practice in college program and application processes, the application for Call Me MISTER specifically asks for a recommendation from a person that can attest to the candidate's community connections and/or interest in teaching.

A second layer to the application process is listed on the Magnolia University website as follows:

> Following the submission of the items above, an interview will be
> scheduled with prospective program participants to ascertain their
> potential for teaching and their motivations for participation in the program,
> as well as to provide an opportunity for clarification of any information
> submitted through the application process.

After interviewing several Magnolia University MISTERs, it was discovered that this interview is a two-part interview. The first interview is done with the program director for Call Me MISTER at Magnolia, then the candidate moves onto a panel-interview with the officers that are elected each year in the Call Me

60

MISTER program. The interview and application have been noted as equally important in the selection process by the program director as well as the officers.

The Magnolia Call Me MISTER program also is in compliance with federal non-discrimination policies. Their website states:

> It is the policy of Magnolia University that no person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or in any way be subjected to discrimination in any program or activity of the University. Participation in the Call Me MISTER Program is open to anybody, regardless of race or gender, if they are capable of facilitating the achievement of its objectives.* Discrimination based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation or veteran's status is prohibited. *Direct quote from our U.S. Department of Education grant proposal documents.

It does stand to reason that since the objective of the Call Me MISTER program is to increase the pool of minority male teachers, applicants not falling into the category of "minority male" may have more difficulty proving how their entry into the program would help Call Me MISTER achieve that mission.

Program Initiatives

The Call Me MISTER program partners with different organizations and businesses throughout the year to run initiatives for the MISTERs. At the time of this research, the initiative is a business suit drive that encourages sponsors to contribute a tax-deductible $400 for two suits. One suit is designated for a MISTER to wear during presentations and interviews while the other can be

61

given to a donor of the sponsor's choice or a second MISTER. This is only available in the fall semester for the MISTERs and sponsors. Although past initiatives are not available on the website itself, through a keyword search of "magnolia university call me mister program initiatives," a basketball tournament, silent auction, and banquet were discovered to help MISTERs out with tuition, supplies, and conferences.

Program Personnel

The only dedicated faculty member for the Magnolia chapter of Call Me MISTER is the program director. The courses that the MISTERs take are alongside fellow college colleagues who may or may not be in the Call Me MISTER program. The program is also run by five elected student officers; president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, and recorder.

General Student Data

Although specific enrollment, graduation, and post-graduate career information was not provided even after repeated requests in person, via phone, and email, a general idea of the enrolled population can be found on the Magnolia Call Me MISTER website (2016) through photos and articles. A report by Hicks and Klonowski Leach (2013) found that from 2008-2013 sixty men had entered the program. Half of these students did not complete the program for the following reasons:

- 14 changed majors
- 11 were dropped from the program for non-participation in required activities

62

- 2 withdrew from college for financial reasons

- 1 withdrew from the program but not the university

- 2 did not maintain grades to stay in the program

Of the remaining thirty, twenty-two were still currently enrolled in the program and eight had graduated. Of these eight (at the time of the report), seven graduated MISTERs were employed in the field of education and one was unknown. The current website data shows between eighteen and twenty-two men in each photo, which stands to reason that these numbers of approximately four to five men graduate from the program each year. Although the exact age of each man in unknown, the interviewees ranged in age from eighteen years old to thirty years old.

Pathways to Becoming a Mister

The experiences and backgrounds of the men that chose to enter the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University were diverse, yet each one deliberately entered a program that would ideally land them with a career as an educator. As less than two-percent of the teacher work-force is classified as minority male (Kunjufu, 2012; Certain, 2011; Nelson, 2011), finding the reasons that these men decided to join Call Me MISTER is relevant to the program. As one participant coming straight into the program from high school explained:

I needed to be realistic and find a real career. My principal kept telling me to stop thinking about playing football for a Division Three school and think bigger and more into the future. He introduced me to Call Me MISTER and had me go to the Summer Institute. I joined as a MISTER-in-training in

63

eleventh grade after Summer Institute and Call Me MISTER helped guide
me through academics with the brotherhood I felt and people to help [me].
Although this was the most common type of answer from the eight men
interviewed (five went straight from high school into the Call Me MISTER
program), three others had very different paths. One man in his thirties
explained:

> I'm a non-traditional college student. I dropped out after sophomore year
> of college and then started working with my sister. I knew I needed more
> for myself and for my kids, but I just figured I had to tough it out. I kept
> thinking about my kids like, "Don't be like me. Thirty years old with two
> young kids and trying to get college done." But I told this to Dr. Hicks who
> introduced me to the Call Me MISTER program and saw what I can give
> back to the young brothers and what the program can do to help that. I
> didn't want to be in a neighborhood with ex-cons and ex-felons. I wanted
> to be a part of this.

Another participant that explained his motivation and path to the program had a
story that went beyond his own personal history into the generation and history of
the area surrounding Magnolia University. He explained that his mother had
been a teacher in the district for over twenty years and had been fired under
circumstances he described as racist-based, despite her earning two Masters
degrees and having a history of success with her students. Having grown up in
the area affected by the closing of schools to avoid integration, he went on to
explain:

My Dad didn't start kindergarten until he was 11 years old. They

graduated him at 21 just to push him through. I didn't want part of any of

this around here. I went to UVA in the Engineering school and wanted to

switch majors to Communications. I was one of the only- hell- I was the

only minority male in any of those classes. I had a 1.9 GPA and couldn't

find any support so I left. I worked at a child development center, though

and saw how everything I did the third and fourth graders picked up on.

One of the moms was a teacher around here and introduced me to the

Call Me MISTER program so I met with [the program director] and I knew.

I knew it was my calling to work with these kids and this would help me.

These examples of varied pathways into the Call Me MISTER program

demonstrate that Call Me MISTER can be entered from several different phases

in life from straight out of high school to a career-switcher. The common thread

between all is that the introduction to the Call Me MISTER program flipped a

switch for these men. For the participants that were entering the program

immediately after high school as well as the men who had careers outside the

education sector, once they found the Magnolia University program, each

decided that a career in education was feasible and desirable with the Call Me

MISTER cohort.

Breaking stereotypes.   As the statistics have proven that minority male

educators are an exception in the classroom (Kunjufu, 2012; Certain, 2011;

Nelson, 2011), the Call Me MISTER students are entering a field that is not

considered a traditional career pathway. The men spoke about the stereotypes

65

of becoming a teacher from the lens of education as a career choice as well as their experiences being minority males. One participant explained:

> It's not all about the money, but it's all about the money. All you hear about is teachers saying that they don't make money so picking that is like saying, "I don't want to make money." But it's not like that for everyone. I mean, lots of people are teachers, so why not me? It's not all about the money.

The stereotype of teachers not making money was also compounded by being male, as explained by this participant, who stated:

> With being the man of the house, it's like going into teaching would mean I'm not the breadwinner and that's kind of tough, you know? I want to take care of my family and be a provider. I know that my money isn't going to be as much if I am a teacher. I know teachers who have second jobs or want nicer cars and can't get them. I want my family to have what they need- and want- is all.

For these men, the financial aspect of teaching is an unattractive hurdle to overcome not just in and of itself, but also because of the labels we have imposed on men as "breadwinners" and "providers" for the household. When asked further about why the first interviewee decided to go into the teaching profession despite the potentially low salary, he commented about a bigger vision:

> I know that it's my calling. I have always gained happiness through other people's happiness. I've always had a passion for helping other people.

It's not something you can think about like all about the money. I know I

am supposed to be teaching so I can give back to the community and to

the kids. I love working with kids and that's where I am supposed to be

even if the money isn't all there.

Another approach by the latter participant to overcoming this stereotype is by

viewing teaching as part of a bigger picture. This is captured in his explanation:

I guess it's about balance and a family decision. I don't think I would be

happy at like a desk job so that wouldn't make me a good husband or

father anyhow. I don't want to be one of those people who just chases the

money then hates going to work every day. We may not be running off to

vacation every year in Las Vegas, but teachers make enough to buy

houses and put food on the table. I just want to know I am doing what I am

supposed to be doing, and that is working with kids. And I may go into

administration even after teaching or something and those jobs pay more,

too.

For these men, breaking into a field that is historically not known for generous

salaries was a deliberate choice. The greater mission of working with students

and making a change was enough to convince them to join the Call Me MISTER

program.

For other men, different stereotypes proved to be obstacles to overcome.

During the focus group, a participant commented about how he was already

experiencing being one of the only minority males in the classes he attends. He

noticed:

67

Magnolia is itself predominantly female. Then take the classes I'm taking to become a teacher and then it's even more. I wouldn't really call it a drawback having a bunch of females in class with me (laughs) but I never envisioned being the only male in a class. Or sometimes I am the only African American in a class. Or sometimes both.

This was followed up by a small chorus of affirmation from the focus group and he went on to explain how this motivates him instead of discourages him:

But this has really opened my eyes to seeing a female perspective. And I want to participate even more to give my perspective. They need to know about my viewpoint as well and hear the African American male perspective. Historically, this isn't a place where many guys are into, so I have to be even more outspoken in a class of women.

As an afterthought to this comment, another participant added on:

But I think it's a good thing. I mean, here we are the minority or the only male or whatever. But that's what it's going to be like in the schools. It's not going to be us and a bunch of other African American men. Maybe it's a real benefit having that now and preparing us for it in the workplace.

This latter comment was also followed by several participants agreeing with his statements. Even though the career-field is not stereotypically dominated by minority males, these participants actively acknowledge this, and are using their college and Call Me MISTER experiences to motivate them to continue with their mission of becoming teachers.

68

Influences of internal people. As the men in the Call Me MISTER program took me through their journey on how they became enrolled in the Magnolia chapter, a common theme emerged of current members and faculty having a profound impact on their decision to join. All of the eight participants were introduced to the program through a third-party instead of discovering Call Me MISTER on their own. Five of the eight participants went straight from high school into Magnolia's program and were introduced to Call Me MISTER in their high school years, then put in touch with the director or a current member. The influences of these current members and director steered them into pursuing admission. As one participant straight from high school explains:

My PE teacher knew about the program and asked me to go to Summer Institute, but I didn't know if I wanted to give up part of my summer and stuff. Then our principal talked to me and said I should go but I still wasn't really sure. So then in eleventh grade there was this meeting and they had [Chris] come and talk to us. I stayed after and found out he was a single Dad who never dreamed he could really get the education he wanted and now through the brotherhood and academics and support, he was a straight-A student graduating in a few years. I mean, if he could do this and having people around helps, I thought I needed to do this, too.

In these statements, this participant demonstrates a feeling of connection with a member of the program before even being admitted into Call Me MISTER. This is reiterated by another member who explains how he came to hear about the Call Me MISTER program through a history teacher, but was not particularly

inspired to join the program until meeting with his sister's friend, who happened to be in the call Me MISTER Magnolia chapter. He explains:

> I knew about the program but it wasn't until I talked to one of the MISTERs and then I started thinking it's legit and it's for me. I think that you hear of all these programs like 100 Black Men and Call Me MISTER and they all sound good but you don't really know exactly what you're getting into and everything. And then I met [Lewis] and we were talking about him and the MISTERs and it made it seem real. I could see how it helped him and how much enthusiasm he had for it and it made me think, you know, it just makes sense.

In this reaction to an inquiry about what lead up to his joining of the Magnolia Call Me MISTER program, it is clear that a conversation with an internal member was a catalyst for this participant to decide to apply to the program.

Although this critical conversation component was also the case for several men, for half of the participants, the specific internal member that influenced their decision to join was the Call Me MISTER Director at Magnolia University. Four of the eight participants mentioned a conversation with the Director as a pivotal point in their decision-making. As one recollects when I asked what factors contributed to him making a commitment to the cohort:

> When I met with [Dr. Jones] he just knew what the questions were that I had and he asked me where I wanted to be in ten years. He talked about goals and planning and looking at the path to get there. Basically, after talking with him I knew that I could walk the path alone or I could walk with

70

other men who have the same goals. And [Dr. Jones] knows where the success stories are and that walking along with your brothers, you keep in-line and your eyes on the prize and you have the support. He knew how to get me thinking about where I really want to be.

In reaction to the same question, another participant stated:

I got put in touch with [Dr. Jones] by my gym teacher and basketball coach. When I first talked to him, it was just that I was going to think about going to Summer Institute- or that's what I thought it was going to be. But then [Dr. Jones] took the time to tell me his life story and talked about becoming an educator. I had never really thought about becoming a teacher but then I got inspired from talking to him. When I went to Summer Institute and got to talk to him more and hear about him influencing other young men I wanted to join.

These two men clearly recollected the Director, [Dr. Jones], as having a direct impact on inspiring them to become members of Call Me MISTER at Magnolia University. The Director has served as a teacher, dean of students, principal, assistant superintendent, interim superintendent, and college professor. Aside from these experiences that have led him to his position as Director of the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University, he has also served on the Center for Black Enterprise as well as the Community Academy School. [Dr. Jones'] dynamic personality and expertise have been critical in some of the participants' journeys to the Call Me MISTER program.

Elements of service.   When asked about their pathways to the Call Me MISTER program, six of the eight participants had worked or volunteered in some sort of human services prior to joining the program. Two of these men had coached and refereed youth sports, two had become mentors to elementary students, one worked as a tutor at a speech and learning center, and one worked at a child development center before applying to the cohort. Although none of the six men directly linked their human services experiences as a crucial decision-making factor explicitly, each of them included it included it in their explanation of what their journey was like in becoming a MISTER. One participant stated:

> I got an opportunity to meet kids who needed a mentor at a speech and learning center. And it was like whatever the child needed for tutoring, we were like their big brother. And this boy in the second grade was being raised by grandparents and was just mad and not getting good grades and wouldn't open up to anyone. But then when we hung out a few times he started to open up and he wasn't opening up to anyone before. But watching him be so shy at first and then start to come out and then become more studious- it was exciting. I got excited about going in to see him and help.

In this explanation, this participant felt fulfilled after assisting the second-grader with not only academics, but also with getting to know the boy as a person. The sense of "excitement" in watching youth develop and grow resounded throughout the other participants' accounts of their acts of service. Feeling an attraction to

72

the potential positive impact on others' lives was echoed in statements such as, "The way the kids draw you in is incredible. The three and four years olds did everything I did so I had to be sure I was being a good influence to them. And then it felt good when they did what I did." and, "Coaching and pushing kids to see the best in themselves makes it all worthwhile. Like when they do something they didn't think they could do and you look back and think, 'I helped with that,' it's a really good feeling." These participants had already experienced not only helping other people, but had profound fulfillment in their interactions.

A sense of belonging. When the participants were asked about what factors contributed to them making a commitment to the cohort, each of the eight men mentioned feeling like they were in the right place joining the Call Me MISTER program. Although this may seem like internal influences affecting the men's decision to join (there are certainly internal influences involved), there was a deeper sentiment than just feeling a connection with an individual to the group. The participants explained that they felt a place for themselves in the group as a whole. As the man in his thirties explained:

> I've been on teams and had colleagues at work and joined clubs and
> whatnot- and in some of them, I just felt like I was at home. It felt like those
> were my people and I belonged. But that hadn't happened in a while at
> work or at socializing. But when I met the MISTERs, I felt like these are
> my people and this is where I belong.

Several men even took this sense of belonging to explain the dynamics of how they belonged to the group. One participant eloquently explained a sense of

finding a group where each man felt like he had a place to not only contribute to the group, but also learn from the group. He stated:

> I feel like there are places in life you are supposed to be and people you are supposed to be around. We are born into a family and we are supposed to be around that family to support and be supported while we grow up. Then you hit the real world, the grown-up world, and then you need to find that next family- that family that celebrates you when you succeed and lifts you up when you're down. You celebrate with them and feel joy in their success and you lift them up when they need it. And when you find a group where everyone is working together to make sure everyone is supported, looked after, held accountable, loved- that is the family you belong to. That's the MISTERs family and you can feel it immediately when you are around them.

The Call Me MISTER program, according to that participant, is not a fleeting camaraderie, but truly a place where these men felt comfort, support, and understanding instantly upon their introduction. It stands to reason that finding an assembly of people with the same career goals that provide a system of support and friendship would be highly attractive to these participants. Another man explained his attraction to the group as feeling like he found his "brothers" in this description:

> When I got introduced to the MISTERs it was during Summer Institute. And it wasn't like I was new and on the outside and had to get in. It was that I was already in. I knew I belonged here and they knew it. And just

like that they were my brothers and we was this brotherhood. I know we all

are here for each other and I knew that the first time I was around

everyone. It wasn't just like they were here for each other just through

college either. You could tell that we was going to be around for life. I

knew that the first time I was with them, too.

The sense of immediately belonging to the group resounded among all members

of the participating group. One described it as a "click" when he met the existing

members of the cohort. Another participant said that after only attending

Summer Institute one day, "I felt tighter with the MISTERs than people I went to

Kindergarten through high school with."   The participants all expressed a sense

of being a member of a group where they each fit in.

Feeling a calling. The most universal of the reasons the participants

gave for deciding to join the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University

was that they felt a "calling." When asked about their journey to becoming a

MISTER, six of the eight men that were interviewed used the term "calling" or

"called" in their interview and the other two described it as a "passion."

Webster's Dictionary defines a "calling" as "a strong urge toward a particular way

of life, career, or vocation." One of the men explains this urge in the following

manner:

I always wanted to help out youth and give back but I didn't really have a

goal how to do that. When I met with [Dr. Jones] and heard about the

mission of Call Me MISTER, I felt a calling to it. Like when he started

asking me about all my goals and how I was going to achieve them I didn't

75

know what to say. But then they have this program and it's like exactly what I would hope for to make me get to my goals.

Another participant described his feelings in these words:

I've worked with kids before and thought that was what I wanted for my future. But then life came at me and when I dropped out of college the first time I just had to make ends meet and I didn't think more about it until I heard about the MISTERs. When I learned more and met up with them and heard about everything, then I knew I had what I needed to do what I was called to do- work with kids again. Teaching is what I'm called to do.

These men felt that their mission was to find a career that would help them fulfill their desires to interact and positively influence younger people. Once introduced to the elements and atmosphere of the Call Me MISTER program, there was an intangible sentiment drawing them to the cohort. Another MISTER paints this picture of his calling:

I want to bring unseen potential out in people- even people who might not have the proper upbringing. Everyone has potential. Call Me MISTER breaks stereotypes and ideologies. Every African American male isn't potential trouble. And that's why I felt this calling to join Call Me MISTER. We are helping all that and mentoring and giving back. We give back. And I could see that I could get the happiness from seeing other people reach their potential in the program.

This participant is also an officer in the Call Me MISTER Magnolia University cohort. He explained during a different phase of the interview that when he is on

the panel interview for MISTER candidates, he listens for them to talk about their "calling."

This notion of a "calling" aligns with the Magnolia University Call Me MISTER Vision Statement, which varies only slightly from the Vision Statement at Clemson University (the original and nucleus campus). The Magnolia University Call Me MISTER Vision Statement from their website (2016) reads:

> From the time I was created, I was made to be a LEADER.
>
> Since the day I was born, I have been a man of influence.
>
> I am a LEADER because of what's inside of me.
>
> I am on the path to my calling because I have vision;
>
> I am focused;
>
> I know my history and
>
> I am prepared to serve.
>
> So when you address me, do not minimize my destiny, but please, please celebrate my GREAT CALLING!

The capitalization in these last two words is exactly as it is written on the Magnolia University website. Also noteworthy is that the vision statements are similar between Magnolia and Clemson University, but the two words "GREAT CALLING" have been changed from "great vision" in the vision statement on the Clemson University website (2015). The calling that all eight of these participants described is reflected in the values adopted by the Magnolia University cohort.

77

Experiences in the Call Me MISTER Program

      Brotherhood. Each of the participants in the interviews individually and collectively considered the bonding of the group one of the most powerful phenomena from joining Call Me MISTER at Magnolia University. During one-on-one interviews, the description of the connections that the men felt to each other was most often described as a "brotherhood." One MISTER stated:

      Once you're a MISTER you are always a MISTER. There's a bond here.

      And there's everybody here looking out for you and not just in the

      classroom. It's a real camaraderie and brotherhood here. These are my

      brothers and we are in this for life, you know? Some sort of cohort ends

      when you are done with the cohort, but that's not this.

Another interviewee reflected the same sentiment when he said:

      One of the best things about being a MISTER is that we are a part of

      something together. All of it. We have classes and meetings and

      volunteer and go to schools and study and some even live together. So it's

      not just like a program or something extra. Call Me MISTER is all of it and

      we are all doing it together so there's a brotherhood and a bond. It's not

      just a brother that's on your football team or a brother that you see at

      church or whatever. These are brothers that are walking through life with

      you.

In these potent statements, the interviewees expressed their deep connection to each other, which was not limited to the Call Me MISTER program itself. Rather, there was an emotional connection articulated by the participants. These men

truly care about each other as whole beings, not just cohort-members. Participants also expressed a life-long commitment to each other as they talked about the brotherhood they are a part of in Call Me MISTER.

The sense of immediate belonging to the group was echoed during the focus group as well. When participants were asked how well they knew the other group members, there was a collective laugh and several, "Oh, we know each other!" comments with a few winks and hand gestures that went around. When asked to explain more, one participant said, "We all know what's up because we talk so much. Not just in the meetings and in class, but we hang out. We're not talking because we have to. We talk because you want to know what's up with your brothers." Another MISTER followed that up with, "It's also not so big that you don't know who the other MISTERs are. I like it small like this so we all know each other."

Through the individual and group accounts of their time with Call Me MISTER, the theme of a brotherhood emerged. This brotherhood was defined by the participants as something that was not just for the time in which they were enrolled in Magnolia University, but an everlasting bond, appreciation, and support network for each man. The mentioning of "brothers" or a "brotherhood" came up most frequently in describing the Call Me MISTER program in general, benefits of the program, and strengths of the program.

Setting goals.

Throughout the individual interviews, six of the eight participants stated that having attainable and/or definable goals was a critical part of their

79

experience with Call Me MISTER. Five of the men also claimed that they were not focused on any real career goals prior to Call Me MISTER. As one participant elaborated:

It wasn't until I was asked what my plan was after college that I realized I didn't have one. [Dr. Jones] asked me what I was going to major in and I told him criminal justice. He asked what I was going to do with that and I think I told him I was going to be like C.S.I. or something (laughed). He asked did I really see myself doing that and I said I might but there was a reason I was meeting with him anyway to learn about the MISTERs so then I knew I didn't really have a plan. And then when [Dr. Jones] told me about setting goals and where did I see myself in five years- he just helped me see that I needed real goals like what he was talking about.

For this participant and several others, the journey to becoming a MISTER was not just about having a career in education, but having a concrete plan with attainable goals along the way. The goals of graduating college within a specific time frame and gaining employment as a teacher were more definable and attractive to these men. Another participant explained it in this way:

He ([Dr. Jones]) asked me what my five-year plan was and I was like, "I mean graduate and get a job and get my own place" or whatever. And he pushed me like, "But what does that look like? What does that mean?" And it made me think about how I didn't really know. I was just a senior in high school but you have to start thinking and moving toward something not just moving. He got me thinking about the goals I wanted like getting a

teaching job in an elementary school and graduation with a solid G.P.A. and making them real through the program. And when we meet and talk we are always looking at our goals and like, are we getting there or how do we get there?

The goal of the Call Me MISTER program is evident in its first mission-statement, which reads from the Magnolia University website (2016), "The mission of the Call Me MISTER (Men Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) National Initiative is to increase the pool of available teachers from a broader, more diverse background, particularly among the State's lowest performing elementary schools." This career-goal is not the only goal that attracted men into this program, however. The smaller goals leading up to finding a teaching job such as a specific grade point average and an expected graduation date also were mentioned. Beyond graduation, several participants mentioned having goals that they were working toward including starting a family, buying a home, and furthering their career. One career-switching participant said:

> You can't just float through and that's what I was doing. I wasn't going anywhere and I was making ends meet and that's it. And I wasn't happy but I didn't know how to make a change. But here, when we get here we talk about how to plan and not think too hard about it, but where do you want to be in five years? Ten years? And we set goals and you have to be real with yourself and say, "Is this helping me get to this goal?" or, "Are those people good for me trying to get to this goal?" and you make decisions. But finally I had goals. I have goals.

81

For these men, the goal-setting (and attaining) was an alluring part of the Call Me MISTER program that helped them decide to join. The idea of mapping out a plan and checking off specific accomplishments along the way was a positive, healthy approach to a life-plan. The constant revisiting of these goals also was expressed as a constructive affirmation of their experience in Call Me MISTER.

Financial support.   Although financial support was mentioned by each of the participants as one of the factors that contributed to their commitment to the cohort, it was not mentioned as a first reason by any men interviewed. Although specific information about financial support not available to the public, six of the participants said that the standard formula is that MISTERs at Magnolia University can get eighty percent of their tuition paid for as long as they maintain a minimum grade point average (which, at the time of the study was a 2.5), attend biweekly meetings on a regular basis, and participate in a minimum number of hours of community service.

According to the participants, details about grades, attendance, and volunteerism are subject to change from year to year at Magnolia University as the program documents are reviewed and adopted each year by the current Call Me MISTER officers. It is clear from the websites of various Call Me MISTER chapters that these details also vary depending on the school. For example, at Coastal Carolina University, their website (2016) states that MISTERs must maintain a 2.5 grade point average, but on the Cheyney University website (2016), it is stated that MISTERs must maintain a 3.2 grade point average.

None of the MISTERs went into elaborate detail about the appeal of the tuition forgiveness, but as this was mentioned by every single interviewee, it is certainly a noteworthy motivator to join Call Me MISTER. One participant that was a career-switcher explained, "I knew I didn't want to take on the full debt of going back to college. It's hard when you're my age and you've got bills and a car and everything so this made it feasible for me and my family." Another participant straight out of high school said, "I mean, I was going to get financial assistance wherever just because of my situation at home. So, I could go get money somewhere else but this was getting financial aid, the enrichment and summer institute, and not just on my own."

Throughout the individual and focus-group interviews, the financial support came up as a draw to the program and initiative to stay in the program. It was not, however, spoken about with as much detail, anecdotes, or emotion as the other factors. As financial aid, along with the Program Director, sense of brotherhood, and summer institute, are the only factors mentioned by all participants, it is clear they act as enticements and benefits to the Call Me MISTER Magnolia University program.

Learning to pay it forward.

In addition to membership in the cohort, participants also discussed the importance of volunteerism once accepted into the program. The men discussed that giving back to their community was not only personally gratifying, but also a critical part of their collective experience. During one of the individual interviews, one man described how important volunteerism was for him in this way:

Like in a few weeks we are helping out with Magnolia University's Center

for the Visual Arts because they do a program for the kids in the

community. All the community kids come in to do crafts and music so we

help out and get them all set up. It's about being part of the community

and the kids come in and have fun and get snacks and their faces painted.

And we get to be a part of all that and help out, so it feels good to see the

families all in there and know we helped make it happen.

Thus, this participant makes clear that giving back to the community enhances

his time in the cohort. In addition, he explained that the MISTERs have fun

together and talk about their experiences when they get together later. The

bonding over the volunteerism was also mentioned by another participant who

said:

When we go to schools to tutor or whatever we do together we have fun

with it. So, we have these required hours we have to do, but it doesn't feel

like work because we are out there with our brothers paying it forward in

the community. We have to keep track of our hours, but I think most of us

have more hours than we track because we love getting out and doing

things together- not just hanging out, but doing stuff that matters.

The community involvement was mentioned as a positive, meaningful component

of the program by six of the participants (and was not mentioned by the other

two). The activities mentioned that they have done in the community include

school visits, mentoring, tutoring, family programs through Magnolia University,

coaching sports, refereeing, and community clean-up. Being a part of a larger

84

picture than just the cohort has enriched the Call Me MISTER experience for these men.

Benefits of the Program

    Developing networks. Five of the participants mentioned that one of the benefits to belonging to Call Me MISTER is that the reputation of the program has helped them to network and make connections. As the goal of the program is to increase the population of minority male teachers in the field of education, it is important for the MISTERs to find employment in the schools once they graduate. The ability to leverage the program name to open doors has been an experience best explained by this participant:

> I know that I want to teach in Virginia, but my family is up north of here
>
> some and I think that getting back in there would be best, but there aren't
>
> openings right now. So, I was talking to [Dr. Jones] about it and he said
>
> that he knew someone who wanted to have someone come talk to their
>
> students about Call Me MISTER and I got to go talk to the principal to
>
> arrange it all. So, when I went to the school to talk, I got to talking to him
>
> more about wanting to work in one of the schools up there. He said he
>
> didn't have an opening for history, but that the other high school did and
>
> that coming from Call Me MISTER and talking with me, he was going to
>
> reach that principal and give him my name. So, it's like it opens doors
>
> when you can back up what you're doing and say that you belong to this.

This man, and others, described that their experience in Call Me MISTER has helped to create a support system they may not otherwise have. The Call Me MISTER name can open opportunities for their future plans.

Not only can MISTERs use the program name to potentially open new career prospects, but as Call Me MISTER is a system of cohorts around the United States, it also helps them network outside of their own campus for support. Much like a fraternity name pulls people together around a common identity, the Call Me MISTER participants also benefit from mutual bonding experiences. Although residing in Virginia, one man explained:

It's definitely a tight group here but there's more MISTERs out there from all over the U.S. I think I'm going to be here for now, but I know that I can call up the MISTERs at Clemson or wherever and have that for me if I ever want to move. It's like once a MISTER, always a MISTER, no matter where you've been. Everyone helps each other out, even if you can't all be at national conventions or haven't met.

This participant explains how the name of the program provides a starting point for conversations even beyond the immediate vicinity. Using their membership in the program to make new connections and potentially open doors throughout the nation is a tangible advantage for these participants.

Academic support. Extra layers of academic support in the program make the Call Me MISTER cohort attractive for the participants. Two of the participants had dropped out of other colleges before attending the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University. Both of these participants expressed

that they were hesitant to try college again because they had not felt they were academically prepared or supported in their previous college situations. One explained about his experience in engineering school (E-school):

I thought I wanted to be an engineer. I don't really know why but the money looked good and I was always a math and science guy, so I applied for the E-school and got in. I found out real quick I didn't want to be there and grades were slipping and I couldn't get help. It was like it was so big that it was hard to find it- and I know that sounds crazy but like, I didn't even know my own professors and they had so many students in these huge classes and it felt like no one had time for or noticed I was failing until I had a 1.9 G.P.A. at the end of my first year. Now, I had a 4.2 in high school. I fell through the cracks, though, in the E-school.

This participant went on to explain that he was hesitant to even try college again because he did not want to become a dropout again. One of the major differences about Magnolia University's Call Me MISTER program that he noticed immediately was that the classes were small enough that there was more accountability. Furthermore, the tutoring and study halls that Call Me MISTER provides members helped him remain in good academic standing.

The appeal of academic support was also important for two other participants as they navigated through classes coming straight from high school into the Call Me MISTER program. One explained:

I mean, I thought high school was easy; even dual-enrollment. I didn't have to study for test and quizzes. I mean, I just showed up and did my

87

work. Senior year I was so lazy. But then I came here and college opened

my eyes to have to put in the time and do the extra work. I didn't have

study skills, work-habits, nothing. But when you have this team around

you like here that watches you and helps you study and figure it out you're

going to make it. I don't think I would have made it somewhere else

because I didn't know how, but we have to go to study halls and the

brothers are in the same classes to figure it out together.

In these accounts, program participants expressed how important it is to them to

have the provisions for not only front-loading students with support like built-in

study-halls, but also to have comrades to be able to reach out to that are in the

same courses. Of course, without passing courses, these men would not be able

to graduate and become educators. The Call Me MISTER program design

emphasizes the importance of academic success and the participants expressed

the importance of these to their overall academic achievements in college.

Summer Institute convening. During the focus group, as well as during

each of the individual interviews, participants reflected on the power that Summer

Institute has had on them as part of the cohort. Summer Institute is a week-long

conference for active and alumni Call Me MISTER men to convene for

workshops, site-visits, keynote speakers, teambuilding, and induction of new Call

Me MISTER members. This institute is specifically for the members of the

Magnolia University cohort and was mentioned as a profoundly positive

experience for each of the MISTERs interviewed. One of the participants in his

first year of the program reflected:

88

I went to summer institute my junior year and it was unlike anything I had

been a part of. It was this group of MISTERs and then people like me who

were checking out the program but everyone was just all together and it

definitely made me want to be in it. But now that I am on the other side it's

like even more – means more to me. It's recharging and all this time

together that we bond and get the new MISTERs to see what we are all

about. When you hear from the graduates and they tell you about their

experiences and everything then you get excited about finishing and

getting out to the world to do what we are meant to do.

This participant was not only motivated to join the program due to Summer

Institute, but his encouraging experiences during Summer Institute also solidified

his continued commitment. Although he has only participated in two institutes so

far, his commentary demonstrates the power of this element of the program.

Another interviewee talked more in-depth about his feelings during

Summer Institute and the preparation for this annual event. He stated:

Every year it's this huge build-up to Summer Institute- like it's another

Christmas in the summer for us. We get to all get together and dig deep

about our mission. It's all of –like everyone with this big, huge feeling of

we have a purpose and we are important in what we are doing. When

people are talking about what it means to be a black man trying to make a

change in the world, you know? It's an inspiration and gets everyone

feeling amped up and ready to tackle any obstacles. We get to take the

new MISTERs and welcome them to the family with a huge reception. The

whole thing makes you feel like you can conquer anything and everyone

has your back.

For this MISTER, Summer Institute is a time for fellowship and getting to re-confirm the commitment to the mission of the program. This has proven to be a much-anticipated event that he explains is a critical part of the cohort in order to energize the group. For this participant and others, the Summer Institute is an influential experience in the program that re-ignites the men's commitment to each other and to the greater cause of increasing the number of minority men in education.

Evangelism

The participants noted that a type of evangelism is an integral part of the Call Me MISTER program. This zealous advocacy, arguably goes hand-in-hand with the overall mission of Call Me MISTER (2016), "The Call Me MISTER program is contributing to the talent pool of excellent teachers by identifying and supporting young men who are literally 'touching the future' by teaching children. This successful model seeks to reverse the lack of young men who are leaders, role models, and teachers in communities." As the point of the cohort is to increase the number of minority men, it makes sense to recruit new minority men into Call Me MISTER. One MISTER explained this in the focus group as:

It's that when you believe in what you're doing, you want to get more

people involved. It's such a great program an opportunity so we want to

tell as many people as we can. So we go into the high schools, back into

our schools, and tell our friends and tell our friends to tell their friends. I

don't think any one of us doesn't talk about it to our friends all the time and

be like, 'You know what? You should do this, too.'

Others in the group agreed and added that they would not have known about it

without other MISTERs reaching out to them as well. One said, "I know I

wouldn't be here if it weren't for someone just in my shoes today, so I want to

spread the word, too." Another participant echoed the same in saying, "I know we

feel a sense of pride when we see someone we've touched coming into the

program and knowing all that they get to get into by becoming a MISTER." These

reflections demonstrate how this is not only an essential component of the

MISTERs' experiences, but also a rewarding element of the program.

No Regrets

During interviews, participants expressed in a variety of ways that they

have never regretted joining the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University.

Three of the interviewees stated that they really didn't know what they would be

doing now if it had not been for discovering the cohort. When asked how much

of an impact Call Me MISTER has had on their futures, each participant not only

described the impact as profound, but also described the impact in positive terms.

One participant stated:

This has had such an amazing impact on my life. I don't know where I

would be right now without it, you know? I mean, three years ago, I was a

college dropout working for minimum wage, really- dead end. And it's a lot

of work. I mean, you have school, homework, meetings, volunteering,

study halls, school visits, tutoring, programs, etc. So it's not that being a

91

MISTER doesn't mean you don't have to put in work, but it's good work-like work towards a goal. I think that's it that being a MISTER has made me have goals again and achieve my goals.

In this account, as well as others, the men reflect on their time with Call Me MISTER as positively shaping their future. Not one participant expressed any hint of remorse or regret in being a part of Call Me MISTER. Instead, the participants spoke of the importance of this program in their lives presently and the positive impact they feel it will have on their future.

Program Design and Outreach

Application process. The application process for joining Call Me MISTER was described as straightforward and extremely positive by the majority of participants. When asked to describe the admissions process, these interviewees spoke of how writing the admissions essays helped motivate them to want to be in the program even more. The two essay prompts for admissions are "Why I Want To Teach" and "How do you believe the Call Me MISTER program will benefit you as a student?" (Magnolia University, 2016). One MISTER reflected, "I got to lay it all on the table. I got to tell my story and let them know why I belong here. The essays were easy to write because it all came from in here (the participant tapped at his chest) and I had been waiting to get it all out." In the same sentiment, another participant spoke of his essays by saying, "I am not the greatest writer and when I saw there were essays I was all, 'Man! Not essays!' But then I started writing and thinking about how I wanted this so bad.

The essays, turned out, were so easy because you get to put into words how you see yourself becoming a MISTER."

The participants also agreed that the interviews during the admissions process were a positive experience. There are two rounds of interviews to becoming a MISTER (the first is with the program director and the second is with a panel of current MISTERs). Both interviews were described as engaging and increased interest in the program for the participants. The one-on-one interview with the director of the Magnolia branch of Call Me MISTER was described by one participant in the following way:

> I was intimidated at first because, you know, this is it. I'm meeting with the head hauncho and nervous and everything. But then he told me his story and I got relaxed. I felt like there was hope. He told me about the mission to help bring unseen potential out of people and even some people who might not have had the proper upbringing. I got to tell him about my story and I felt like we connected right there.

This experience of feeling bonded to the director was reiterated by four other participants who felt attached to the program and director after the one-on-one interview.

The panel interview was also a critical part of the admissions process because participants met current MISTERs and heard about their perceptions and experiences. Although some participants had already met MISTERs in the program during Summer Institute by the time they were interviewed, some had not spoken to a current member at length until the panel interview. One of the

participants who had not met current MISTERs explained, "I think it's the most important part. I didn't know that at the time, but now as I sit in on interviews, I think it is. You can see if someone is sincere; if he is real. You don't have to think too hard because you can just start the conversation and know if they are in the right place." The idea of having this interview with current members seems vital to the program as the idea of a cohesive cohort is part of the overall appeal. This panel interview was described by one member as, "It's not really an interview. I mean, there are questions, but it's more casual and I remember feeling like I was talking to my friends even though I hadn't met them before." This commentary also demonstrates that the panel interview was another positive part of the application process.

Although the application form and records part of the admissions process also did not seem to discourage the participants, two of the MISTERs stated that the financial aid portion of the application process (which covers up to eighty percent of their tuition) was confusing and frustrating. Both described having to submit the forms several times on-line, having them rejected without explanation; thus, having to print out the forms, and ultimately missing the deadline for financial aid. Both men also stated that the faculty point of contact for these forms was not very available to assist them and that they had run into the same issues for more than one semester.

Recruitment. Each of the eight participants in the study mentioned recruitment and/or outreach as one of their core missions for the program. During the individual interviews, participants were asked about what they feel the

most important long-term solution is for getting more minority males in the classroom. Everyone interviewed gave an answer involving spreading the word. One interviewee pointedly explained:

> You have to use yourself as the model and get out there. You have to tell people about the program and be the face of it. When other men like you see that you can do it, they know they can do it, too, so it's all about getting into the high schools and even middle schools and recruiting those young men to becoming MISTERs, too.

This idea of being an evangelist for the program was also prevalent in the focus group, when the participants discussed new places to start recruiting men. Some of those places recorded were churches, YMCAs, Boys Clubs, Community Colleges, and even the gym. The recruitment discussion did not have a tone of obligation tied to it, but was described as part of these participants long-term goals for themselves and for the program. During the focus group, one MISTER said, "We are here because we want to see the change and get more men into the schools, so we have to act on that, find more MISTERs, tell people what this is all about." This statement was followed by another participant's comment, "And it's not just now, but like when we go out into our own schools, talking to our students and showing them about Call me MISTER has to be part of it." Therefore, the evangelism component of the program seems to be that which the participants readily embrace and also enjoy.

Levels of support. The multiple levels of support offered by the Call Me MISTER cohort was mentioned by all men during their interviews as well as

brought up in the focus group. The different supports mentioned included soft-supports like being around like-minded individuals, having a sense of brotherhood, and people to go to who were experiencing the same phenomenon. The more concrete supports included dedicated tutoring time, financial support, having the director as a mentor, and having classes in cohorts. These supports are not only attractive while in the program, but also have encouraged the men to continue with the program. The two men who had previously dropped out of college explicitly stated that their current supports made the difference in terms of their current success compared to their last college experience. For example, one participant explained:

> I just couldn't seem to find my way. There were black student alliances and I could apply for financial aid and everything but it wasn't the same. And I was slacking, I'm not going to lie. But that's the difference right there is that here you have it so that you're surrounded by people who won't let you slack. They set you up here so that you can get the tutoring and talk to people if you feel like you're behind. And you always have [Dr. Jones] to go to and it's not so big that he doesn't know who you are. He knows all of us so he isn't going to let one of us slack.

The multi-tiered supports from the personal, to academic, to financial were consistently brought up as parts of the program design that are critical to the success of the MISTERs.

Faculty relationship. During the interviews, all participants expressed strong ties to their program director, [Dr. Jones]. He was described by the men

96

as "mentor," "father I never had," "hero," "role-model," and "brother." Each of the participants described how important and impactful [Dr. Jones] has been during their time in Call Me MISTER. While Magnolia University does not hold extremely large class-sizes, the extra faculty presence has proven to be very beneficial for these men. One of the men explained:

> It's my first time living away from home and it's also the first time I feel like I have someone around all the time who I can go to for advice on anything. My own dad wasn't around and [Dr. Jones] is like the father I never had. And I have gone to him about anything- school, sports, girls (laughs). But he doesn't judge. He really lifts us up and holds us together.

The other participants also described having a personal relationship with [Dr. Jones]. For four of them, [Dr. Jones] was one of the reasons they decided to join the cohort originally after hearing him speak at their school or Summer Institute. This particular faculty relationship was described as one of the most compelling components of the Magnolia University Call Me MISTER program.

Lifelong skills. The interviews that were conducted were all with current members of the Call Me MISTER program and the questions for the interviews (Appendices B and D) were focused on the components and experiences within the Magnolia University cohort. During each interview, however, the conversations turned into how the Call Me MISTER experiences have equipped these men with lifelong skills. One participant talked about how he has developed leadership skills:

97

I definitely wasn't a leader in high school. I was more of a follow-the-crowd and just do what everyone is doing guy. But now, I can say I am. They teach us how to be role-models and make decisions that are in line with our goals and that's what leaders do. In our mission statement we recite that we are leaders but I didn't really feel it at first. But now, I feel like I am.

Four other interviewees also specifically mentioned leadership development as their most profound experiences with call Me MISTER. Two of the participants specifically mentioned using these leadership skills to eventually take on the director role of the Call Me MISTER program (one at Magnolia University and the other at a different branch).

Other lifelong skills and developments that were mentioned included public-speaking, financial planning, goal-setting, loyalty, written communication, cultural sensitivity, professional dress, self-motivation, self-confidence, and study-habits. These MISTERs credit the cohort not only with preparing them with the credentials and support for becoming an educator, but also with becoming a more effective and whole human-being. One of the participants who had previously dropped out of college declared:

For me, this was my last first-step to my future. Now I'm on a path I wasn't on before and I don't just mean becoming a teacher. I think that something happens between ages nineteen and twenty-five that make or break you. It's a complete learning stage and either you come out on top if you keep learning or you're just not going to make it. Finally, I can say I'm going to make it because of this. I can say I've gotten the degree, ok, but I

98

learned how to speak up and become a leader. I learned how to figure things out on my own and know when to ask for help. And I learned as much from my professors as I did from my brothers. It's not just about teaching, but it's about goals, habits, and how you can be a role-model for other people.

For this MISTER and the others interviewed, the takeaways are deeper than just the credentials they have received. These men feel that the program has altered the course of their future because of the skills and proficiencies they have attained that can be applied to the rest of their lives.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Overall Experiences

One of the research questions asks "What are program participants'
perceptions of program impacts?" The input of the participants from the individual
and group interviews result in the following conclusions about various
components of the call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University. Although
multiple aspects of the program were broached either by the interview questions
or by the interviewees themselves, these conclusions are drawn from the most
universal responses as reflected in the coding and analysis of the interview
transcriptions.

Admissions ease. The Call Me MISTER interviewees found the
admissions for the Magnolia chapter to be well-designed, reasonable, and even
motivating to go through. Although two of the MISTERS mentioned a possible
re-structuring of the admissions process, this was only to involve a few more
people in the interview portion of admissions. In this re-design, the president and
vice-president of that year's Call Me MISTER program would be able to sit in on
the interviews along with the program director. This was explained as a

100

potentially greater motivator for the candidate as he would get more exposure to current MISTERs during the admissions process.

The participants indicated that in the admissions process, it is important to recognize that the candidates may not have come from the strongest academic background or standing. Therefore, it is more important to the admissions panel to hear the story of why the candidate is interested in joining the cohort, what his motivations are in becoming a teacher, and the letter of recommendation on his behalf. That is to say, Call Me MISTER is much more interested in the members' futures than their pasts. This is significant as the research has proven that measures such as standardized scores and grade point averages alone can be prohibitive in gaining admission to teaching programs (Ford, 2013; Erwin & Worrell, 2012; Taliafero & DeCuir-Gunby, 2007). While the admissions process does not rely heavily on a grade point average or standardized test scores, the expectation is that the MISTERs will be successful as long as they are provided the necessary academic support.

The admissions process is therefore viewed by participants as a positive and necessary experience that makes the selected members part of an elite group without being exclusive on the basis of previous academic standing. This is a memorable process for the MISTERs in that each of them recalled their time interviewing with the program director and feeling inspired from hearing his background. The essays about why they want to teach and what they hope to get out of the program also proved reaffirming for the MISTERs as it was an

opportunity to put into concrete words some thoughts that had lacked definition up to that point in their lives.

Upon receiving notification that they had been accepted, each MISTER recalled a feeling of pride and hope for the future. The admissions process proved to be a notable experience for these men without being overwhelming or tedious.

Membership Motivators

Once admitted to the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University, the men identified several key motivators that kept them on the course toward graduation. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2016), African American males are more likely to drop out of an undergraduate program than Caucasian males, Caucasian females, and even African American females. It is significant, then that these Call Me MISTER undergraduate students have identified several key motivators that keep them in the program through graduation.

Financial appeal. According to the Magnolia University website (2016), the average cost for tuition for an in-state resident is $13,236. For out-of-state students, this cost rises to $26,706. Neither of these numbers include room and board, which adds $10,272. It is no surprise, then, that the appeal of tuition forgiveness was mentioned by each participant as a motivating factor to join and stay in the program. Although no one specifically shared their exact financial assistance numbers, several mentioned that they receive an eighty percent reimbursement.

The criteria for receiving tuition reimbursement includes maintaining a minimum grade point average, meeting attendance, and volunteer hours. Each year, the exact numbers for these are reviewed and altered. None of the participants expressed any concern over the qualifications being too rigorous or unattainable. One of the men even commented, "You have to have some sort of standard or else it's not really a program. We are expected to earn our tuition. It's not just a handout."

Men that receive tuition forgiveness are also expected to teach one year for each year they receive the financial assistance. This did not seem to detract the men as they intended to enter the teaching field after earning their degree. When discussing the yearly teaching requirement, a participant jokingly stated, "I mean, we have to teach for each year we get tuition assistance, but that's the whole point. I am doing this so I can teach!"

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2012), one of the top reasons students do not go to college is because of the costs associated with earning a degree. Thus, it is significant that the Call Me MISTER program offers financial aid to not only draw men into the program, but also to retain them in the cohort.

Cohort relationships. The sense of loyalty to the cohort and its members was one of the clear messages that the participants expressed in the individual and group interview. In experiencing the same phenomenon of the Call Me MISTER program, not only have participants have found a group with the same goals, but they genuinely expressed a deep bond. For these men, the

commitment to the group and friendships formed with group members is an extremely powerful motivator to stay in the program.

Some of these bonds were easily described, such as each interviewee calling the other cohort members "brothers" or describing the Call Me MISTER program as a "brotherhood." One participant spoke of the support he finds in the other MISTERS by stating:

> It's not just a group of us all trying to get somewhere and achieve our goals. It's not like that at all. It's that you have people you can lean on. When you're strong, you strengthen them. When they are strong, they lift you up. You can count on them to be there for you in life, forever. Everyone is here to help you.

Another participant talked about the cohort dynamics in these words:

> I think of a fraternity as something you do in college. This isn't like a fraternity because it's your brothers for life. If someone has a success, we all celebrate. We all want the best for each other so we are here to make sure everyone gets their hours in, has their grades together. If you're slipping, someone is going to call you out and check up because that's what family does.

In these statements, the men speak of how they are constantly in-tune with each other to support each other. The magnetism of this brotherhood helps the men motivated to stay the course and in the cohort.

The dynamic of the true brotherhood was also noted in the manner in which these men interacted with each other both in the group interview as well as

outside the interview. In the focus group, the body-language of all of the participants was noteworthy. When one participant was speaking, the rest were listening without distracting themselves with phones or side-conversations. They were respectful to each other's comments and there was minimal interrupting each other. The posture of the men as leaning into the group (instead of arm-crossing or leaning back) also showed a sustained interest in the conversation and what other cohort members were contributing. Several times, one participant invited another quieter participant to contribute to the conversation. These mannerisms in the focus group demonstrated a true friendship, interest, and respect for each other.

Outside the focus group, I was able to observe some more casual interactions that demonstrated a genuine bond. One of the interviews was being conducted at a coffee shop on-campus, and another MISTER happened to walk in. The interviewee called him over and they greeted each other with huge smiles and a two-armed embrace. Listening to their casual conversation, it was clear that the men are actually invested in each other emotionally. This bond was apparent also when I went to a few meetings for the MISTERs. As the men trickled into the meeting room, they were received with hugs, smiles, small-talk about school, family, and weekend plans. Although not easily quantifiable, it felt more like a family reunion than a bi-weekly meeting.

This cohort is important, then, especially considering three of the interviewees mentioned leaving their previous colleges due to a lack of support (two dropped out and one transferred). The support system of a cohort for

105

coursework and volunteerism is one of the most impactful retention factors due to the organic bond that has been formed between both present and graduated members.

Professor support. Participants in the study collectively and individually made mention of the program Director, [Dr. Jones], as a key factor to their success. Although [Dr. Jones] was not present for any of the interviews or the focus group, he was definitely on the forefront of their thoughts when asked what made the men committed to the cohort. During the focus group, when a participant spoke of the care and support offered by [Dr. Jones], there was a communal head-nod in agreement.

Not only was [Dr. Jones] key in the recruitment of some of the MISTERs, but continues to be a mentor to the men.   It is noteworthy that [Dr. Jones] is also an African American male in that the research has shown that not having a male African American role model in school can dissuade other African American males from entering the teaching profession (Perkins, 2011; Chmelynski, 2006; Jordan & Cooper, 2001). Having [Dr. Jones] as a trusted and adored figure-head for the program is motivational for these men, one of whom explained:

> It's that he ([Dr. Jones]) is there for us and we know he has our back. School stuff, friend stuff, girl stuff. Whatever. We know someone is in our court and we can go to him with whatever and he helps us through. He's like the father I never had.

Another participant spoke of his relationship with [Dr. Jones] in a similar manner, but made mention of the importance of having a relatable role model. He stated,

106

"I know that [Dr. Jones] gets it because he's been through it as another black man. He knows where I'm from so I can go to him." Hearing the participants speak so highly of their program Director when prompted about their commitment to the cohort indicates that [Dr. Jones] has been a key, positive motivating factor in the MISTERs in-cohort experience.

Setting Up for Academic Success

Since the ultimate goal of the Call Me MISTER program is to graduate with a teaching degree, academic success is clearly a major component of the program. With the understanding that all of the men in the program have successfully been accepted not only to Magnolia University, but also the Call Me MISTER program, there still remains the body of research that indicates that African American students perform lower than their Caucasian counterparts in math, English language, science, social studies, and reading (McMahon, Keys, Berardi, & Crouch, 2011; Rust, Jackson, Ponterotto, & Blumberg, 2011; Craig, Zhang, Hensel, & Quinn, 2009; Taliaferro & DeCuir-Gunby, 2007; Cooper & Schleser, 2006; Rozansky-Lloyd, 2005). The Call Me MISTER program has built in mandatory study halls, clustered the students in small classes, and offers tutoring to any MISTER that needs extra assistance.

The participants in this study mentioned both in the individual interviews and the focus group that they have felt set up for success academically. When asked what the strengths of the program are, the MISTERs all mentioned at least one of the academic supports as part of their own success story. One MISTER explained:

107

We get to a new level here with classes. It's small classes and you can really ask for help and talk to the professor and they know who you are. Then, if you need more help, all you have to do is ask the MISTERs at study hall or wherever. So, at first I thought I was going to hate the study halls and was like, mad or something that I had to go to them. But that wore off fast. It's part of my schedule now and I know I'm going to get my work done where everyone is there if I am struggling or have a question or something. The study halls definitely are one of the strengths of the program.

The class sizes are intimate enough that the MISTERs feel like they can reach out to the professor. The men also feel the dedicated study time supports their academic success.

In the focus group, when study hall was mentioned, it was not spoken about as an annoying obligation. The participants described it as "getting together to get our work done" and "time when everyone is there studying and you can ask them questions." This positive acceptance of the academic supports was universal among the participants.

Next Steps for Participants

An important part of the Call Me MISTER program is that each graduate has a clear path for the future. When asked about what the future holds for them, the participants mentioned both short and long-term goal-setting as part of their experience with Call Me MISTER. This annual goal-setting and review was described positively by the participants as "grounding," " re-focusing," and "a

108

great reminder of why I am doing this." Short-term goals included graduation dates, maintaining or improving grade point averages, and experiences such as volunteering more in schools and tutoring. Long-term goals included career-paths, plans for starting or expanding a family, and giving back to the community and program.

Career paths. Interviewees described how they see their careers in both the immediate future as well as longer-term. Predictably, with the degree they are earning, all participants stated that their immediate goal upon graduation was to become a teacher. Three MISTERs specifically mentioned wanting to teach elementary school, two mentioned middle school, two mentioned high school, and one candidate said he wanted to teach all grade levels during the span of his career. Two participants explicitly stated that they wanted to eventually go into administration. In order for Call Me MISTER members to effectively carry out the mission of the program (to increase the number of minority male teachers), the intentions of these men to enter education as a career field would then prove this mission a success.

Giving back to Call Me MISTER. During the focus group, participants were asked what future plans they had for involvement with Call Me MISTER. The men all expressed a desire to work with the program in the future, mentioning coming back for Summer Institutes, mentoring, tutoring, and recruiting new MISTERs. As one explained:

This isn't touch-and-go. It's not just something you do at Magnolia

University because it's bigger than that. It's about making a difference

109

and you don't just do that while we are here. It's the beginning while you

are here and you have to keep it going and keep making a difference even

after graduation. Graduated MISTERs are still very much a part of the

program.

As this participant explains, continuing to be a part of the program is an

expectation of participation. Although interviewees were not specifically asked

about future involvement with the Call Me MISTER program, two of the

participants mentioned that they would like to come back and be a program

director for Call Me MISTER. This enthusiastic intent to being involved in the

Call Me MISTER program even after graduation demonstrates the long-term

commitment and bond these men feel to this program and its purpose.

Program Successes: According to the MISTERS

In order to conclude whether or not the Magnolia University Call Me

MISTER program has been effective, it became evident through the coding

process that success needed to be measured both on a personal level as well as

the program as a whole. These do intersect as each graduating MISTER that

enters the field of education contributes to the collective growth of minority males

in the profession. The difference, however, is the personal experience and

impact of Call Me MISTER on the individual participant versus the belief of the

participant that the Call Me MISTER program is successful.

Individual impact. Participants were asked in their individual interviews,

"How much of an impact on your future do you feel Call Me MISTER has had?"

The responses to this question from all eight candidates reflect that this program

110

has had a significant effect on their future, but the impacts itself were quite varied. One participant stated:

> This has had a huge impact. It's what I needed to drive me. I knew I wanted to be a teacher but, I don't know. It's all out there with classes and years of school so getting started was something I kept putting off. Once I learned about Call Me MISTER, there was like this roadmap and I could see myself actually on a course. Shoot, I'd probably still be floating around otherwise doing minimum wage still.

Another participant shared this sentiment that if not for finding Call Me MISTER, he would not have pursued education as a career. In an emotional manner, he explained:

> On my future? This has provided me a second chance. The mother of my children passed away when they were five months old and fifteen months old. I was doing what I needed to do just to get by. I wasn't thinking of college because I have these two boys and was just making ends meet. When I heard about this- this program turned me around; turned my life around. I'm able to go to school full-time and be a father full-time. Call Me MISTER is everything to me.

Clearly, these men credit the Call Me MISTER program as having a direct impact on their future as they decided to join the program rather than continue in their former lifestyles.

Some other MISTERs had already decided to become educators, but recognize Call Me MISTER as the catalyst for their continued success. One

111

participant explained, "Such an impact. There's no way I would have dreamed of coming to college and going into a bunch of debt. I wanted to be a teacher, but really? And then I heard about this cohort and I thought I really could do it through this." Another MISTER proclaimed, "Huge impact! Like huge! Teaching was something I wanted to get into, but no way without all the support and tuition assistance and help from Call Me MISTER. Just no way. Huge impact!" Both of these men claim that without Call Me MISTER there is "no way" they would become a teacher.

Three other MISTERs that were asked the same question explained that they knew of the program in high school, so aspired to become a part of it. They each acknowledge that Call Me MISTER has had a direct link to their future as an educator. One explained, "It's had a really big impact. I knew Call Me MISTER was in my future so I had to make sure to keep clean and get the grades I needed. Once I heard about it my junior year, it became my future." Another participant stated, "This has had everything to do with my future. I mean, you want to be a teacher but there's all these other things that pop up and you can lose focus. It's been what I could focus on since I was in high school and that made me think about my future and that I could do all that here." These MISTERs see the program as directly having had an impact on them in the past as well as their future.

One of the interviewees had dropped out of another college before finding the Call Me MISTER program. When asked about the impact on his future, he paused for several seconds before answering:

112

I don't think I would have a future without it. It's had such an impact I can't

even explain. I mean, I'd already dropped out once so I was sure I wasn't

going back because, you know? I'd already failed at college. Now, this is

my future- my career, my brothers. I remember the first time I set a five-

year goal. I'd never done that before in my life. But here you decide your

future and then you make it happen. I don't even know what would have

happened. Probably nothing good- or well, not as good as this.

In this very candid reflection, this interviewee reveals that he believes his future

would not be as successful had he not joined the Call Me MISTER cohort. His

claims that he didn't think he would have a future, but through the program and

goal-setting, now feels he does have one is a powerful tribute this man gives to

the Call Me MISTER program.

The eight candidates each articulated that Call Me MISTER has had a

positive and profound impact on their futures. Although not quantifiable by

nature, using phrases such as "huge impact," "such an impact," and "I don't think

I would have a future without it" indicate that these men do not feel the Call Me

MISTER program was a minutely-contributing part of their future. Their words

acknowledge that this program has defined their future and had a significant

impact.

Mission statement fulfillment. As opposed to the individual impact of

the Call Me MISTER program on each man, the overall program can be

evaluated based on whether or not the Mission Statement is fulfilled. From the

Magnolia University website (2016), "The mission of the Call Me MISTER (Men

Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) National Initiative is to increase the pool of available teachers from a broader, more diverse background." Since the program at Magnolia began in 2007, it has, in fact, graduated African American men who have become educators. Although the exact number has not been made available, that number still does not affect the finding that the program has fulfilled its mission by even graduating one minority male who became a teacher. As of 2013 (Hicks & Klonowski Leach) at least seven African American males had graduated from the Magnolia University chapter of Call Me MISTER and were employed in the field of education. The degree that the program is successful would need more numerical data to be evaluated, including follow-up with all graduates to track longevity in the career field.

Limitations

This study was limited by several factors that could have impacted interpretations and conclusions. First, the sample size was small at eight participants. Although there are currently around twenty MISTERs at this particular site, less than half responded to my requests to be interviewed. If the sample size were a better representation of the population, interpretation of the participants' experiences in the program would be more robust.

Secondly, the only men interviewed were current members of the Call Me MISTER program. The fact that their overall experiences have been expressed as predominantly positive could correlate with program retention. Since I was unable to find any MISTERs that had dropped the program or were dropped from

114

the program, those experiences and viewpoints are not included in the current conclusions. Furthermore, graduates of the Call Me MISTER program were not consulted as part of this study. It may be helpful if future studies include the reflections and perceptions of men a few years removed from the program.

Finally, the inability to garner specific numbers for enrollment, demographic data, graduation rates, and post-graduate career information was a limitation. This information would have been extremely helpful in creating a complete picture of the Magnolia University Call Me MISTER experience. However, after multiple requests, it became clear that strains on the relationship between the researcher and the much-needed participants were developing. Thus, the researcher refrained from pushing further.

Future Studies

To expand on this research, a program evaluation could be conducted to further understand the components of the Call Me MISTER program and whether it could be transferred to other universities in Virginia. Also, this study design could be replicated with other chapters across the United States to learn more about how each chapter varies according to local culture. These results could be used to strengthen programs based on recreating the positive and effective experiences in each chapter.

It would also be interesting to find out more about the students that join the Call Me MISTER program. Who, exactly, are the men completing the program and entering the field of education? Do they have characteristics in common? For example, what are their high school grade point averages? Did

115

they grow up in rural, suburban, or urban locations? What are their socio-economic statuses? Answering these questions could help target future candidates and concentrate MISTER recruitment to specific regions.

Another possible study would be to compare program-completers with those who leave the program. What are the program and personal characteristics that may have made the difference? For example, what type of recruitment methods have worked best in the case of program-completers? Best practices might be identified that could be used to reach potential candidates in places such as middle-schools, high-schools, childcare centers, community-colleges, or other identified pipelines for finding MISTERs.

Finally, a line of research that would certainly add depth to the results of this study would be to interview eligible students that do not apply to the Call Me MISTER program. Since the mission of Call Me MISTER is to increase the pool of minority teachers, interviewing minority males aspiring to degrees in education (but not through Call Me MISTER) might provide valuable insights. Discovering the motivations and detractors from students who could be MISTERs but choose not to would give an idea of outsiders' perceptions of the program.   This information could then be used to increase awareness, debunk false perceptions, and recruit more candidates into the cohort.

Lessons and Expansions

This study specifically focuses on the experiences of eight African American men in the Magnolia branch of the Call Me MISTER program, but the lessons learned from the research could be applied to a broader base. As we

116

see the drive, loyalty, and commitment to program completion of these men, we can look at the elements that they identify as keeping them in the Call Me MISTER program to combat student attrition and dropout rates in general. What would happen if we made all students set annual short and long-term goals? What if we reviewed those annually to set up a realistic plan of action- and then checked in to see how they were doing throughout the year?

The power of the program Director also cannot be overlooked as a key part of the Call Me MISTER experience. What if we mentored students with a 25:1 student to mentor ratio? What if we paired up students with mentors they select as inspirational and relatable? In my experiences in public education and college, my "mentors" or "advisors" have always been assigned to me by some algorithm or divided by my last name. The same holds true for students I have mentored. Instead, what if we let the student make their own selection? Would they find more of a bond with their advisor? Would there be less attrition among students who select a trusted advisor?

Finally, how can these principles be applied to other universities either as formal programs or as stand-alone components? The research has shown that the collective components of Call Me MISTER at Magnolia have created a positive and successful program for these men, so can we draw out parts of this for either subsets of students or the student population as a whole? For example, what does a true cohort look like? What is needed to create those bonds for students? What would that cost in resources and financially? What if

117

applications were more of an invitation into a program instead of a weed-out process?

The participants in this study have clearly identified what they see as the elements that have attracted them to the Call Me MISTER program as well as why they are successful in the program. Some of these men had even tried college before unsuccessfully. Perhaps the components they have identified could be used by universities nationally to make college seem attractive and attainable to any interested student.

Closing Remarks

The pathway to this study was not an accidental one. The researcher acknowledges not only her own biases, but also the journey that fueled her interest in this program. As a part of an externship years ago, I had the privilege of attending parts of the Call Me MISTER Summer Institute under the previous Director. At this point in my studies, I had not focused on a specific topic for my dissertation, but had an interest in the Call Me MISTER program. However, during the very first meeting at the Summer Interest, my research topic was solidified.

As the first meeting of the first day began, all of the MISTERs and alumni stood together and echoed out a collective message of leadership, pride, and inspiration. I learned later this was the program vision statement. Hearing this chorus of men declaim the vision statement together at commencement was chilling and thought-provoking. I realized the power and uniqueness of this program instantly. I have belonged to countless school divisions, clubs, programs,

118

sororities, and philanthropies- yet I cannot recall knowing even one of the visions verbatim. We definitely never recited it from memory. These men, however, use this as a driving mantra that they refer back to, take pride in, and collectively celebrate by this recitation. I knew then I needed to learn more about this program and the men who call themselves MISTERs.

Each graduate of the Call Me MISTER program is considered a victory. As the purpose of the program is to increase the number of minority men in education, Call Me MISTER at Magnolia University is doing exactly that. As the research has shown, one of the most common reasons African American males enter the field of education is because they have had an African American male educator role model (Chmelynski, 2006 & Jordan & Cooper, 2001). The exponential impact each of these graduates can make considering the number of students they will come in contact with each year of their career in education is immeasurable. It is, however, possible to conclude the experiences in the Magnolia University Call Me MISTER program as overall impactful and positive for the participants in this study. Mark Twain is credited with saying, "The two most important days are the day you were born and the day you find out why." That sentiment resounded throughout the study. In fact, these men were born into the world and Call Me MISTER helped them find their calling.

References

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2007). *African American students and U.S.*
high schools. Retrieved July 5, 2012 from http://www.all4ed.org/files/
archive /publications/AfAm_FactSheet.pdf.

Bond, T. N., & Lang, K. (2012). The Evolution of the Black-White Test Score Gap
in Grades K-3: The Fragility of Results. *Review of Economics and*
Statistics, (0).

Brooks, K., Schiraldi, V., & Ziedenberg, J. (2000). *School house hype: Two years*
later. Washington, DC: Justice Policy Institute & Children's Law Center.

Brown, J.W., & Butty, J.M. (1999) Factors that influence African American male
teachers' educational and career aspirations: Implications for school
district recruitment and retention efforts. *The Journal of Negro Education,*
68, 280-292.

Bryan, J., Day-Vines, N. L., Griffin, D., & Moore-Thomas, C. (2012). The
disproportionality dilemma: Patterns of teacher referrals to school
counselors for disruptive behavior. *Journal of Counseling &*
Development, *90*(2), 177-190.

Burchinal, M., McCartney, K., Steinberg, L., Crosnoe, R., Friedman, S., McLoyd,
V., & Pianta, R. (2011). Examining the Black-White achievement gap
among low-income children using the NICHD stufy of early child care and
youth development. *Child Development.* 82(5), 1404-1420.

Calefati, J. (2013). Minority male teacher shortage prompts legislation that aims to boost their numbers. Retrieved October 18, 2013 from http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2013/09/shortage_of_minority_male_teachers_prompts_legislation_that_aims_to_boost_their_numbers.html .

Celis, W. (1993). Cities Innovate in Hunt for Minority Male Teachers. Retrieved October 18, 2013 from http://www.nytimes.com/1993/11/03/education/cities-innovate-in-hunt-for-minority-male-teachers.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm

Certain, T. (2011). National Congress of Black Women. Retrieved July 5, 2012 from http://nationalcongressbw.org/moreblackteachers.aspx.

Chmelynski, C. (2006). Getting more men and Blacks into teaching. *School Board News*, 25(5), 40-43.

Clark, M., Flower, K., Walton, J., & Oakley, E. (2008). Tackling male underachievement: Enhancing a strengths-based learning environment for middle school boys. *Professional School Counseling, 12(2), 127-132.*

Clemson University. (2012). *Welcome to Call Me MISTER*. Retrieved July 3, 2012 from http://www.clemson.edu/hehd/departments/education/research-service/callmeMISTER/.

Cole, N. (1997). *The ETS gender study: How females and males perform in educational settings.* Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Condron, D. J., Tope, D., Steidl, C. R., & Freeman, K. J. (2013). Racial Segregation and the Black/White Achievement Gap, 1992 to 2009. *The Sociological Quarterly*, *54*(1), 130-157.

121

Cooper, L. (2007). Why closing the research-practice gap is critical to closing student achievement gaps. *Theory into Practice*, 46(4), 317-324.

Cooper, L., & Schleser, R. (2006). Closing the achievement gap: Examining the role of cognitive developmental level in academic achievement. *Early Childhood Education Journal,* (33)5, 301-306.

Craig, H., Zhang, L., Hensel, S., & Quinn, E. (2009). African American English-speaking students: An examination of the relationship between dialect shifting and reading outcomes. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research,* (52), 839-855.

Cresswell, J. (2008). *Research Design, Third Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Productions.

Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Productions.

Crotty, M. (1998). The Foundations of Social Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Productions.

Cummins, B. (2013). Males in Teaching. Retrieved August 9, 2015 from http://www.malesinteaching.com/About_Us.aspx

Erwin, J. O., & Worrell, F. C. (2012). Assessment practices and the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted and talented education.*Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, *30*(1), 74-87.

Fenwick, L.T., (2001). Where do we go from here? Diversity in training and school leadership. in Jackson, N., Bolden, W.S., Wiley, S., & Fenwick, L.T.

(Eds.) *Patterns of excellence: Promoting quality teaching through diversity*, 186-195.   Atlanta, GA: Southern Education Foundation.

Ford, D. Y. (2013). Multicultural Issues Gifted Underrepresentation and Prejudice—Learning From Allport and Merton. *Gifted Child Today*, *36*(1), 62-67.

Francis, B. (2000), Boys, girls, and achievement: Addressing the classroom issues. *London: Routledge/Falmer Press*.

Freedle, R. (2006). How and why standardized tests systematically underestimate African-Americans' true verbal ability and what to o about it: Towards the promotion of two new theories with practical applications. *St. John's Law Review*, (80)183-226.

Galassi, J., & Akos, P. (2007). Strengths-based school counseling: Promoting student development and achievement. *Mahwah, N.J. Lawrence Erlbaum.*

Gay, G. (2005). Afterthought: The imperative of learning about legacies. *Black History Bulletin, 68(1)*, 35-37.

Gilliam, W. S. (2005). *Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten systems.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Child Study Center.

Goodwin, A.L. (2001). The summer scholars program: Historically Black Colleges/Universities and leading graduate schools of education to increase the quality and supply of African American teachers. in Jackson, N., Bolden, W.S., Wiley, S., & Fenwick, L.T. (Eds.) *Patterns of excellence:*

Promoting quality teaching through diversity, 148-170. Atlanta, GA:

Southern Education Foundation.

Gorard, S., Rees, G., & Salisbury, J. (2001). Investigating the patterns of

differential attainment of boys and girls at school. *British Educational*

Research Journal, 27(2), 125-139.

Gray, D. (2009). *Doing Research in the Real World*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Publishing.

Gregory, A., Skiba, R., & Noguera, P. (2010). The achievement gap and the

discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher, 39,*

59–68.

Hartney, M. T., & Flavin, P. (2013). The Political Foundations of the Black–White

Education Achievement Gap. *American Politics Research*.

Hicks, D., & Klonowski Leach, Paula. (2013). A Program Evaluation of the Call

Me MISTER Program at Longwood University. Retrieved September 25,

2016 from https://akaeducator.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/

misterpresentation.pptx.

Hirsch, A. (2010). Black History Month has to be more than hero worship.

Retrieved June 1, 2013 from http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/

2010/oct/01/black-history-month-hero-worship.

Holt, E., McGrath, D., & Herring, W. (2007). *Timing and duration of student*

participation in special education in the primary grades, Issue Brief.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2007-043). Retrieved June

29, 2013, from http://nces.ed.gov.

Jackson, N., & Bolden, W.S., (2001). Response of the Southern Education
    Foundation to the minority teacher shortage in the South. in Jackson, N.,
    Bolden, W.S., Wiley, S., & Fenwick, L.T. (Eds.) *Patterns of excellence:*
    Promoting quality teaching through diversity, 37-94. Atlanta, GA: Southern
    Education Foundation.

Jencks, C., & Phillips, M. (Eds.). (1998). *The Black White test score gap*.
    Brookings Institution Press.

Jones, R., & Jenkins, A. (2012). *Call Me MISTER: The Re-Emergence of African*
    American Male Teachers in South Carolina. Charleston, SC. Advantage
    Media Group.

Jordan, W.J., & Cooper, R. (2001). *Racial and cultural issues related to*
    comprehensive school reform: The case of African American males. Paper
    presented for the Symposium on African American Male Achievement in
    Washington D.C.

Kafer, K. (2004). Girl power: Why girls don't need the Women's Educational
    Equity Act. *Washington D.C. Heritage Foundation.* Retrieved June 29,
    2013 from http://www.heritage.org/Research/Education/wm563.cfm.

Kunjufu, J. (2012). *Reading scores and prison growth*. Retrieved July 5, 2012
    from http://africanamericanimages.com/Articles.htm.

Lewis, C.W. (2006). African American males teachers in public schools; An
    examination of three urban school districts. *Teachers College Record,*
    108, 224-245.

Lewis, Sally V., Ascher, D., L., Hayes, B. G., & Ieva, K. P. (2010). Counselor education doctoral cohorts: Growth, reflections, and success. Retrieved July 1, 2012 from http://counselingoutfitters.com/vistas/vistas10/Article_25.pdf.

Magnolia University. (2016). Retrieved from www.Magnolia.edu/callmemister

Magnolia University. (2012). Retrieved October 18, 2013 from www.Magnolia.edu .

Ma, X. (2008). Within-school gender gaps in reading, mathematics, and science literacy. *Comparative Education Review, 52(3),* 437-460*.*

Mabokela, R.O., & Madsen, J.A. (2003). Crossing boundaries: African American teachers in suburban schools. *Comparative Education Review,* 2, 90-111.

Marx, D. & Roman, J. (2002). *Female role models: Protecting woman's math test performance.* Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28, 1183-1193.

McMillan, J.H. (2008), *Educational Research: Fundamentals for the Consumer Fifth Edition.* Boston, MA. Pearson Education, Inc.

McIntyre, R., Paulson, R., & Lord, C. (2003). *Alleviating women's mathematics stereotype threat through salience of group achievements*. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 40, 83-90.

McLeod, S. (2013). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Retrieved April 28, 2013 from http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html.

McMahon, S., Keys, C., Berardi, L., & Crouch, R. (2011). The ecology and achievement among students diverse in ethnicity and ability. *Journal of Community Psychology,* (39)6, 645-662.

126

Minority Male Mentoring Program (2012). Retrieved October 18, 2013 from

http://www.successnc.org/initiatives/minority-male-mentoring-program .

Minter, M. & Gilliam, D. (2001). Building the minority teacher pipeline: The

Grambling State University experience with precollegiate programming in

the Louisiana consortium. in Jackson, N., Bolden, W.S., Wiley, S., &

Fenwick, L.T. (Eds.) *Patterns of excellence: Promoting quality teaching*

through diversity, 171-185. Atlanta, GA: Southern Education Foundation.

Mirriam-Webster (2014). *Mirriam-Webster Online: Dictionary and Thesaurus*.

Retrieved February 28, 2014 from http://www.merriam-

webster.com/dictionary/epoche .

Mitchell, M. & Jolley, J. (2007). *Research Design Explained Sixth Edition.*

Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education.

Monroe, C. R. (2005). Understanding the discipline gap through a cultural lens:

Implications for the education of African American students. *Intercultural*

Education, *16*(4), 317-330.

Muller, C. (1998). *Gender differences in parental involvement and adolescents'*

mathematics achievement. Sociology of Education, 71, 336-356.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2011). *Fast facts: Teacher trends.*

Retrieved September 5, 2013 from

http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=28 .

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2010). *Educational attainment.*

Retrieved October 18, 2013 from

http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php .

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2005). *Student effort and educational progress: The condition of education 2005.* Retrieved June 29, 2013 from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid+2005094.

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2003). *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic minorities*. Washington , DC : Author.

National Education Association. (2007). Truth in labeling: Disproportionality in special education. Retrieved June 29, 2013 from http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/EW-TruthInLabeling.pdf.

Nelson, B. (2011). *We need more black male teachers*. Retrieved July 9, 2012 from http://www.menteach.org/news/opinion_we_need_more_black_male_teachers.

Nelson, B. (2013). My quest to teach: African American men and teaching. Retrieved October 18, 2013 from http://www.menteach.org/news/my_quest_to_teach_african_american_men_and_teaching .

Norton, R. (2005). Call me MISTER. *Black Collegian*, 35(3), 27-28.

Norton, R. (2012). *After 10 years, a look back at the impact of Call Me MISTER®.* Retrieved on July 13, 2012 from http://www.clemson.edu/features/article.php?article_id=2200.

Pabon, A., Anderson, N., & Kharem, H. (2011). Minding the gap: Cultivating black male teachers in a time of crisis in urban schools. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 80(3), 358-367.

128

Parsons, J., Adler, T., & Kaczala, C. (1982). *Socialization of achievement attitudes and beliefs: Parental influences.* Child Development, 53(2), 310-321.

Paul, J. (2005). *Introduction to the Philosophies of Research and Criticism in Education and the Social Sciences*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Perkins, B. (2011). Critical shortage of Black male teachers. *The New York Amsterdam News*. p.13, 36.

Reyes, A. (2006). *Discipline, achievement, and race: Is zero tolerance the answer?* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Ross, M. (2006). Black history month: Has it run its course? Retrieved June 2, 2013 from http://www.nbcnews.com/id/10990868/ns/us_news-life/t/black-history-month-has-it-run-its-course/#.UdGVFD44VAo.

Rozansky-Lloyd, C. (2005). African Americans in schools: Tiptoeing around racism. *The Western Journal of Black Studies.* 29(3), 595-604.

Rust, J., Jackson, M., Ponterotto, J., & Blumberg, F. (2011). Biculturalism and academic achievement of African American high school students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 39,* 130-140.

Schmader, T., & Croft, A. (2011) How stereotypes stifle performance potential. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 5(10),* 792-806.

Schmader, T., Johns, M., & Forbes, C. (2008). An integrated process model of stereotype threat effects on performance. *Psychological Review, 115,* 336-356.

129

Shirley, E. L., & Cornell, D. G. (2012). The contribution of student perceptions of

school climate to understanding the disproportionate punishment of

African American students in a middle school. *School Psychology*

International, *33*(2), 115-134.

Shorter, S.N., & Locklear, Z.W. (2001). Recruiting and retaining minorities in

teacher education: Implementing the value-added approach. in Jackson,

N., Bolden,   W.S., Wiley, S., & Fenwick, L.T. (Eds.) *Patterns of*

excellence: Promoting quality teaching through diversity, 95-109. Atlanta,

GA: Southern Education Foundation.

Skiba, R. J., Horner, R. H., Chung, C., Rausch, M. K., May, S., & Tobin,

T. (2011). Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American

and Latino disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology*

Review, 40, 85–107.

Skiba, R., Michael, R., Nardo, A., & Peterson, R. (2002). The color of

discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school

punishment. *The Urban Review, 34,* 317–342.

Steele, C. & Aronson, J. (1995) Stereotype threat and the intellectual test

performance of African Americans. *The Journal of Personality and Social*

Psychology, 69 (5), 797-811.

Stewart, E. (2007). Individual and school structural effects on African American

high school students' academic achievement. *The High School Journal*,

16-34.

Taliaferro, J. & DeCuir-Gunby, J. (2007). African American educators' perspectives on the Advanced Placement opportunity gap. *The Urban Review,* (40)2,164-185.

Townsend, B. L. (2000). The disproportionate discipline of African American learners: Reducing school suspensions and expulsions. *Exceptional children*.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *The Condition of Education 2016* (NCES 2016-144), Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rates.

U.S. Department of Education. (2006). *Twenty-sixth annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.* Washington, DC: Author.

Van de gaer, E., Pustjens, H., Van Damme, J., & De Munter, A. (2006). The gender gap in language achievement: The role of school-related attitudes of class groups. *Sex Roles, 55,* 397-408*.*

Virginia Historical Society (2016). Civil rights movement in Virginia. Retrieved January 2, 2016 from http://www.vahistorical.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia/closing-prince

Wallace, J., Goodkind, S., Wallace, C., & Bachman, J. (2008). Racial, ethnic, and gender differences in school discipline among U.S. high school students: 1991–2005. *Negro Education Review, 59,* 47–62.

Waters, T. (2005). Why students think there are two kinds of American history. *The History Teacher, 39(1),* 11-21.

Wilkinson, I., Hattie, J., Judy, M., Townsend, M., Fung, I., & Ussher, C. (2000), Influence of peer effects on learning outcomes: A review of literature. *Auckland: Auckland Uniservices*.

Wilson-Oyelaran, E., Johnson, B. L., Perry-Sheldon, B., & Vickers, L. (2001). Measures of persistence and success: A profile of paraeducators attributes and behaviors that supported completion of teacher licensure in the North Carolina consortium. in Jackson, N., Bolden, W.S., Wiley, S., & Fenwick, L.T. (Eds.) *Patterns of excellence: Promoting quality teaching through diversity,* 110-147. Atlanta, GA: Southern Education Foundation.

Witty, E.P. (2001). Correcting the minority teacher shortage: Framing the issue, meeting the challenge. in Jackson, N., Bolden, W.S., Wiley, S., & Fenwick, L.T. (Eds.) *Patterns of excellence: Promoting quality teaching through diversity*, 13-36. Atlanta, GA: Southern Education Foundation.

Yin, R.K. (2009). *Case study research design and methods, fourth edition.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

132

Appendix A

Email invitation to participate to send to Call Me MISTER participants.

Good afternoon,

My name is Stephanie Lennon and I am a student in a doctorate program at Virginia Commonwealth University. I am writing my dissertation about experiences of students that currently or formerly attended the Call Me MISTER program at Magnolia University. Most recently, I taught at Cumberland High School and was introduced to the program by Justin Wilkes, a colleague and CMM graduate from Magnolia University. He and I have worked together on diversity trainings and presentations and he eventually introduced me to the program head at that time, Dr. Neal Holmes. Dr. Holmes allowed me to research the CMM program, attend the Summer Academy in 2010 at Magnolia, as well as do a local program evaluation alongside him. I was even allowed to do an externship in the Magnolia CMM cohort, which sealed my interest in researching the program for my dissertation.

I have been provided your name as someone who may be interested in being a part of this research as my intent is to show the experiences of CMM program participants. I would like to meet with you for an interview to ask of your personal account with the Magnolia University Call Me MISTER program. Face-to-face meetings are ideal and I can meet you at your convenient time and location. If this is not possible, I would still like to include your input if you are available via phone or Skype.

Please contact me through responding to this email or you can reach me by phone at 804-380-1323.

I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration for participation.

Regards,
Stephanie Lennon, M.Ed.

Appendix B

Individual interview guide

Objective: Establish participant background

1- What was your experience with school before coming to college?

2- Are there any significant factors you feel influenced you into the field of education?

3- Is there anything else you feel would help me understand your intentions in becoming a teacher?

Objective: Identify enticement to Magnolia University Call Me MISTER

1- What was your journey leading you to the Call me MISTER program at Magnolia University?

2- What factors contributed to you making the commitment to the cohort?

Objective: Explore program components through participant lens

1- What was the admissions process like entering Call Me MISTER?

2- What do you see as the mission of Call Me MISTER?

3- What are the main benefits to joining Call Me MISTER?

4- What are the drawbacks (if any) to joining Call Me MISTER?

5- What are the strengths within the program itself?

6- What are the areas you feel could be improved upon in the program?

Objective: Assess future plans

1- What are your future career goals?

2- How much of an impact on your future do you feel Call Me MISTER has had?

134

Objective: Discover overall CMM influence and impression

1- Describe your most profound experience(s) with the CMM program.

2- What do you feel is the most important long-term solution for getting more minority males in the classroom?

Appendix C

Email to focus group participants

Good afternoon,

      First of all, thank you profusely for your participation thus far in the Call Me MISTER research. I cannot express my gratitude for agreeing to meet again for a Call Me MISTER reunion and focus group. The purpose of this meeting is to gather your experiences as cohort members collectively now that I have had the pleasure of meeting with you each individually.

      After considering everyone's availability, I would like to meet at _____ (*insert time and location*) and would like to invite you to (*insert a less formal setting here- lunch, coffee, etc) * afterward for some time to socialize and reunite.

      Please let me know if this is not a convenient time or location for you so I can reschedule if necessary. I look forward to seeing you all again and getting to see the Call Me MISTER program through your eyes.

Regards,

Stephanie Lennon, M.Ed.

Objective: Establish relationships

    1- How well do you know the others in this group?

Objective: Identify program experiences

    1- What were the most meaningful experiences/components in CMM?

    2- How likely is it you would have pursued education as a career without

       CMM?

    3- What is something people not in the CMM may be surprised to hear

       about the cohort?

    4- What would you design differently about CMM?

    5- What is the biggest impact CMM has had on you?

    6- Describe the supports in CMM.

Objective: Explore long-term effects

    1- What future plans do you have for involvement with CMM?

    2- What long-term effects has CMM had on you?

Vita

Stephanie Cree Lennon was born September 10, 1975 in San Antonio, Texas. She graduated from high school at Cimarron Memorial High School in Las Vegas, Nevada. She received her Bachelors of Arts in Spanish from the University of Virginia and her Master in Teaching from the University of Virginia in 1998. She taught Spanish and was an assistant principal in Hanover County, Virginia and received her Master in Administration and Supervision from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2003. She continued her career as a Spanish Teacher and administrator in Powhatan County and Cumberland County, Virginia until 2013.

138