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THE IMPACT OF MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS ON THE BEHAVIORS OF FIFTH-
GRADE AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS

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Scot Tyler

Bachelor of Science in Education, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, 1996
Master of Education, Arkansas State University at Jonesboro, 2011
Educational Specialist, University of Central Arkansas, 2018

Dissertation Approval

This dissertation, "The Impact of Mentorship Programs on the Behaviors of Fifth-Grade African American Male Students," by Scot Ali Tyler, is approved by:

Dissertation Chair:

Steve Bounds,
Professor
Center for Leadership and Learning

Dissertation Committee

John A. Freeman,
Professor
Center for Leadership and Learning

Dissertation Committee

Charity Smith
Principal of Education Associates
Fetterman and Associates

Program Director:

John A. Freeman,
Professor and Program Director
Center for Leadership and Learning

Graduate College Dean:

Richard Schoephoerster
Dean
Graduate College and Research

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Abstract

African American males inequitably experience two to three times more out-of-school suspensions among other exclusionary discipline practices in comparison with other racial groups, which causes them to become academically disengaged, increases their association with deviant peers, makes them resent of school personnel, and leads them to experience a heightened sense of alienation. Although much is known about the effects of mentorship programs, there has been little inquiry or research to investigate the relationship between in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students with and without a mentorship program. The purpose of this study was to determine if there was any relationship between the number of suspensions and participation in a mentorship program involving fifth-grade African American male students in an urban school district located in central Arkansas. This study's population consisted of 49 females, 26 males who received the mentorship intervention, and 16 males who did not receive the intervention. The researcher retrieved archived data from over two academic school years to examine the program's effectiveness. The study findings suggest that the mentorship program did not affect the in-school suspension and out-of-school suspensions. The researcher recommended that the Kings-In-Training mentorship program increase the frequency of meeting times to be more effective. Consequently, the study suggested the following strategies: 1) convert to or partner with a community-based program; 2) deviate from a same-race, same-gender mentors to allow different-race or different gender mentors; 3) provide all mentors professional development about African centered education and the cultural risk contributors of the community. The researcher suggested future searchers consider using

a larger sample size, a more affluent area where the crime rate is not as high, or even to involve other ethnicities.

Keywords: In-school suspension, Kings-In-Training, Mentee/Mentor, Mentorship program, African-centered education, At-risk, Behavior referral

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I. Introduction

Many African American male youths are categorized as at-risk individuals who live in high-risk environments with various negative consequences (Polite & Davis, 1984). *At-risk* is generally used to describe youth who show signs of emotional or behavioral problems, who often come from single-parent homes, and lack the support to successfully navigate developmental tasks (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002). High-risk environments are associated with internalizing problems, externalizing problems, and poly-drug use (Sharma, Mustanski, Dick, Bolland, & Kertes, 2019). Compared to other youth, African American youth are exposed to more risk factors associated with low income, such as higher family stress and community violence (Cooley-Strickland et al., 2009). The examination of at-risk minority groups reveals that African-American males appear to be at a disadvantage in realizing the full benefits of education (Schargel, 2013).

Teacher education groups have reformed and revised programs committed to social justice and equity (Ladson-Billings, 2016). Relatively, African American males in education do not experience success levels at ideal times in the labor market or health over the life course (Travis & Ausbrooks, 2012). Ladson-Billings predicated the need for a culturally-relevant theoretical perspective on the growing disparity between teachers' and students' racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics and the continued academic failure of African American, Native American, and Latino students (Ladson-Billings, 2016).

School districts often look to mentorship programs to help African American males since high-risk environments receive minimal supportive services and little media

attention, except to reaffirm assumptions of group deviance and psychopathology (Spencer, 1995). Mentoring programs for at-risk youth are proliferating across the United States (Keating et al., 2002). Mentoring programs have been shown to improve behavioral, social, attitudinal, and academic outcomes in developing at-risk American youth (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011). According to the National Dropout Prevention Center, the lack of a single person caring is often cited as one of the primary reasons students leave school (Struchen & Porter, 1997).

A mentorship program that produces positive interactions and relationships can impact youth's self-worth, self-esteem, and social competence (Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). This study will investigate the relationship between out-of-school suspensions (OSS) and in-school suspensions (ISS) with and without a mentorship program for African American male students located within an urban school district.

Background of Problem

Organized approaches to mentoring youth in the United States date back to reform-oriented initiatives in the juvenile court system more than a century ago (Rhodes, 2005). Since the late 1960s, formal mentoring programs have focused on providing African American students with a mechanism to interact within the educational pathway (Harris, 1999). Near the last four decades, the mentoring process, programs, and models have emerged to explore the complicated relationship of African American students who attend historically White and Black Colleges and Universities (Allen, 1992). In the past 20 years, highly-effective mentoring has been predicted to increase school engagement, student connectedness, motivation, attendance, and academic competencies (Klem & Connell, 2004). Students with greater school connectedness are more likely to actualize

their academic potential; consequently, they are less likely to receive behavior referrals for fighting, bullying, and truancy or less likely to drop out (Portwood & Ayers, 2005).

Research has presented many types and approaches to mentorship over the years. Among those types, one will find the following: natural versus planned mentoring (Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, & Behrendt, 2005), community-based versus school-based (Komosa-Hawkins, 2010), and cross versus same-race mentoring relationships (Watson, 2012). This study will feature a school-based, planned, same-race, Afrocentric mentorship program as the independent variable and how it affects in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions, the dependent variables.

Statement of the Problem

African American males inequitably experience two to three times more out-of-school suspensions among other exclusionary discipline practices in comparison with other racial groups, which causes them to become academically disengaged, increases their association with deviant peers, makes them resent of school personnel, and leads them to experience a heightened sense of alienation (Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002; McNeely, Nonemaker & Blum, 2002; Wald & Kurlaender, 2003; Brooks, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 1999). There is a disturbing statistical correlation of African American males in prison with African American males exposed to expulsion, suspension, and disciplinary alternative education programs in grade school. (Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009). Although much is known about the effects of mentorship programs, there has been little inquiry or research to investigate the relationship between in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students with and without a mentorship program.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine if there was any relationship between the number of suspensions and participation in a mentorship program involving fifth-grade African American male students in an urban school district located in central Arkansas.

Definitions of Terms

- *African-centered education* is education designed to match African people's cultural needs and interests with African descent (Shockley & LeNiles, 2018).
- *Afrocentric* can either mean a program that serves African American youth, a program that uses materials that focus on African American history, or a program structured on an African American model (Major & Weiner, 1997).
- *At-risk* is generally used to describe youth who show signs of emotional or behavioral problems, who often come from single-parent homes, and lack the support to successfully navigate developmental tasks (Keating et al., 2002).
- *Behavior referral* is a documentation of a student's unacceptable behavior that consists of inappropriate language, aggression, and fighting, harassment, property damage, forgery, theft, leaving school property without permission, display of gang-related items or signs, bomb threat, arson, or possession of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or weapons (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2010).

- *eSchoolPLUS*, is a comprehensive student information management solution that provides powerful tools for teachers, administrators, parents, and students (Powerschool, 2020).
- *High-risk environments* are associated with internalizing problems, externalizing problems, and polydrug use (Sharma et al., 2019).
- *Independent Black Institutions* (IBI) are schools established by African Americans to meet the particular needs of their children (Ratteray & Shujaa, 1987)
- *In-school suspension* (ISS) will be considered the denial of regular school class attendance, yet in-school for a specific amount of time that could be 10 days or less (Hyman, 1997).
- *Kings-In-Training* is a planned, school-based, same race and gender mentorship program primarily for fifth-grade at-risk male youths located in a district within central Arkansas.
- *Mentee* is a person who is given support and advice about their job by a mentor (Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, 2016).
- *Mentor* is an experienced and trusted advisor, guide, guru, counselor, or consultant (Jarjoura, 2013).
- *Mentorship program* will be defined as a community-based or school-based program in which volunteers are paired with students to assist them with academic and behavioral problems during or after school (Campbell-Whatley, Algozzine, & Obiakor, 1997).

- *Out-of-school suspension* (OSS) will be considered the denial of regular school class attendance, whether out-of-school or in-school, for a specific amount of time that can be 10 days or less (Hyman, 1997).
- *Queens-In-Training* is a planned, school-based, same race and gender mentorship program primarily for fifth-grade at-risk female youths located in a district within central Arkansas.

Research Questions

The study is anchored upon the following null hypotheses:

H₀1: Mentorship programs will have no effect on in-school suspension rates for fifth-grade African American male students, and

H₀2: Mentorship programs will have no effect on out-of-school suspension rates for the fifth-grade African American male students.

Specifically, the study will address the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not?
2. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not?
3. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students?

4. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students?
5. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school year?
6. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school year?

Significance of Study

This study has the potential to impact and contribute to the knowledge of any professional who desires to see improvement in student engagement and behavior among African American male youth. The primary objective of successful mentorship programs is to improve students' academic achievement, increase attendance, reduce suspensions, and increase participation in extracurricular activities (Preyer, 1990).

One should concur that African American youth and those who lead and teach them should gain from this study. The use of mentoring programs has been shown to improve behavioral, social, attitudinal, and academic outcomes in the development of at-risk, particularly African American, youth (DuBois et al., 2011).

Assumptions

In this quantitative study, it is assumed that the teachers have been exposed to professional development on how to determine offenses that earn in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions. It is also believed that there is consistency among the

staff, and thus they administer disciplinary documentation and actions without discrimination or prejudice. Furthermore, it is believed that all records of in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions of the students enrolled in the mentorship program are kept with fidelity and accuracy.

Limitations

Because of the study's size, the information presented in this study may not be generalizable to the rest of the public schools in Arkansas or the United States. One must consider that the data collected for this study is from students of only one urban school located in central Arkansas; therefore, this study's findings can only suggestively pertain to the general education community. Results may vary per state and district. Moreover, the Kings-In-Training mentorship program, the focused mentoring program of choice for this study, is a relatively small and recent program with a long history. Each mentorship program has its strategies and focus; therefore, one must be careful not to assume that all mentorship programs will have the same results. The mentorship program ended on March 13, 2020, due to the coronavirus and will neither reflect the impact of in-school nor out-of-school suspension rates during the peak season.

Delimitations

This study includes 91 African American fifth-grade students of an elementary school located within an urban school district in central Arkansas for school years 2018-19 and 2019-20 and did not include any other schools or school districts. The mentorship program chosen for this study is the Kings-In-Training mentorship, and no other programs will be considered.

Organization of the Study

This study will present some essential themes observed upon researching the effects of mentorship programs. The first theme to be discussed recognizes the benefits versus the challenges of mentoring. Then, the review will present some advantages and disadvantages of school-based mentorships. Next, it will discuss natural mentors versus planned mentors. The evaluation will conclude with the strengths of same-race mentorship programs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review aims to provide research that demonstrates the effects of mentoring on African American male students. In today's schools, African American male students face over-referral for school disciplinary action and special education (Rowley, Ross, Lozada, Williams, Gale, & Kurtz-Costs, 2014). This trend is also found within the criminal justice system, with African American children being 18 times more likely than White children to be sentenced as adults (Poe-Yamagata and Jones, 2007).

A standard narrative in America's society suggests that African American males are in peril with uncertain futures, and survival should be their goal (Rowley et al., 2014, p. 303). This study will examine how mentoring will affect in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions of African American male youths.

Mentoring has long been a tradition within the African American community, as illustrated through the implementation of various forms of culturally-focused interventions (Brookins 1996). Influential mentoring assists groups socially, politically, and economically (Redmond, 1990). A substantial and growing body of literature has been dedicated to evaluating the potential benefits of mentoring interventions (DuBois et al., 2011). The purpose of this study is to determine if there was any relationship between the number of suspensions and participation in a mentorship program involving fifth-grade African American males.

First, this literature will review the comparison of natural mentoring with planned mentoring, followed by a comparison between school-based and community-based mentoring, with a primary focus on the advantages and disadvantages of school-based

mentoring. Next, the literature will examine the importance of same-race mentoring programs that focus on male African American adult mentors matched with African American male youth. The literature will explore the concept of Afrocentricity in mentorship programs. Afterward, the literature will expand upon the emergence of mentorship programs versus the impact. Finally, a brief description of the Kings-In-Training program will be presented.

Natural Mentoring Versus Planned Mentoring

Mentoring can be engaged naturally or planned, also known as informal or formal, respectively (Bynum, 2015). Natural mentoring focuses on the mentor and the student's needs, whereas planned mentoring addresses the organization's needs, racial and ethnic groups, students, faculty, and society (Redmond, 1990).

Natural mentoring. Natural mentoring relationships occur most often by chance and are more common than formal mentoring relationships (Bynum, 2015). Natural mentoring is often the result of serendipitous contacts in which two individuals grow to know and like each other (Redmond, 1990). Natural mentoring relationships are much more likely than planned mentoring relationships to involve dyads based on race or ethnicity (Zimmerman et al., 2005). African American's perspective of natural mentoring differs in certain areas than that of Whites. African American youth are less likely than White to report natural mentors from the community setting, such as a religious leader, neighbor, or employer (Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, 2009). Both African Americans and Whites report relatives, older friends, and teachers as natural mentors (Erickson et al., 2009). African American adolescent males are less likely to possess natural mentors than African American females (Cooper, Brown, Metzger, Clinton, & Guthrie, 2013).

Planned mentoring. A planned mentoring program is typically managed by an organization in which a mentor is assigned to a mentee or protégé (Bynum, 2015). Planned mentoring in academic settings focuses on philosophical and practical issues that increase cultural diversity and presents opportunities for culturally-diverse students (Redmond, 1990). These opportunities include but are not limited to the advancement for racial and ethnic groups by targeting students who have experienced societal racism, lack of access to social resources, and inadequate educational preparation during their lifetime (Redmond, 1990).

School-Based Versus Community-based Mentoring

Mentorship programs are usually categorized as either school-based or community-based, in which volunteers are paired with students to assist them with academic and behavioral problems during or after school (Campbell-Whatley et al., 1997). Community-based mentoring programs exist across the country, ranging from organizations to local programs founded by local businesses or community organizations (Schwartz, Lowe, & Rhodes, 2012). In recent years, many community-based programs have emerged to fill the need for non-school programs to guide African American male youth through the difficult transition to adulthood (Majors & Weiner, 1997).

School-based mentoring programs have proliferated due to the many benefits linked to mentoring in the school setting, including relatively low cost and convenience to the participants (Portwood, Ayers, Kinnison, Waris, & Wise, 2005). School-based mentorships typically require less time commitment than community-based mentorship programs (Komosa-Hawkins, 2010). However, mentoring relationships require devotion, time, and energy from both mentors and mentees (Harris, 1999). When comparing the

duration, the school-based mentoring relationships, which are typically confined to an academic school year, tend to be shorter than community-based mentoring relationships (Schwartz et al., 2012).

School-based mentorship programs have certain advantages. School-based mentors are provided with more excellent structure and supervision and often benefit from mentoring alongside other mentors who can share ideas and strategies (Komosa-Hawkins, 2010). Another advantage is the low threat of unethical relationships because many school-based mentoring programs limit contact between mentors and their youth to the school environment (Portwood et al., 2005). Additionally, school personnel is generally willing to offer their time and support for school-based interventions, whether by assisting with training, orientation, case management, or monitoring student progress (Komosa-Hawkins, 2010). While school-based mentoring can promote student success and healthy development, it has the disadvantage to be considered before moving forward with implementing a program (Komosa-Hawkins, 2010).

One major disadvantage worth mentioning is the school's time constraints, such as school schedules and calendars (Komosa-Hawkins, 2010). Most mentoring programs require that mentors and mentees meet weekly, thereby creating more significant opportunities for positive youth outcomes to occur (DeWit, DuBois, Erdem, Larose, Lipman, & Spencer, 2016). However, when the mentor and mentee meet with less frequency, time, and duration, there is lesser opportunity to form a necessary bond (Komosa-Hawkins, 2010).

Same-race Mentorship and Same-gender Programs

There is a significant shortage of African American male teachers in K-8 public elementary school classrooms (Jones, Holton, & Joseph, 2019). Tierney, Grossman, and Resch (1995) submitted that mentor/mentee matching criteria should include (a) shared interest, (b) close geographic proximity, (c) same race matches, if possible, and (d) preferences made for students awaiting the longest for a match (Tierney et al., 1995). Since there is a shortage of African American male teachers, choosing African American mentors to work with African American males is often considered. One of the challenges for minority boys with same-race mentoring is the lag time, which is defined as the time it takes to find a suitable volunteer match for a mentor (Tierney et al., 1995). The *Call Me Mister* mentoring program's organizational design has led to success in recruiting, developing, and retaining African American male teachers to become effective and to give back (Jones et al., 2019). Although some assume that effective communication is ensured by matching a high-risk, inner-city youngster with a same-race, same-gender mentor, evidence supporting this assumption is unavailable (Bleachman, 1992). Consequently, researchers have yet to examine whether matching African American male youths to African American mentors versus non-African American mentors make a difference in their mentoring relationships or youth outcomes (Sanchez, Hurd, Neblett, & Vaclavik, 2017).

According to Hughes and colleagues (2009), matching by gender, race, or ethnicity does not impact the success of the mentoring relationship. Likewise, Dubois and collaborators (2002) had previously declared same-race mentorship as being ineffective. In contrast, Lindwall (2017) disputes whether there is sufficient evidence to

claim no risk associated with cross-cultural dyads and provided qualitative support for same-culture, same-race matches. Correspondingly, meeting with someone who can relate to an environment adjusts less overwhelmingly or intimidating (Watson, 2012). It is also important to understand nuances in working with African American males within a southern context (Jones et al., 2019). Mentors and mentees bond around the shared experience of race, along with productive and meaningful mentoring relationships, which could contribute to a person's self-efficacy (Watson, 2012). This same common experience provides positive role-modeling, reciprocity, service to others, and the importance of educational achievement (Watson, 2012).

Afrocentricity in the Mentorships

Many mentorship programs label themselves as "Afrocentric" because they serve predominantly or only African American participants; however, opinions vary on the definition (Major & Weiner, 1997). Afrocentric can either mean a program that serves African American youth, a program that uses materials that focus on African American history, or a program structured on an African American model (Major & Weiner, 1997). Conceptually, "centricity" refers to a perspective that involves locating oneself within the center of one's cultural perspective, while "Afrocentricity" is a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person and their culture (Harris, 1999).

Afrocentricity is often expressed as African-centered education, which requires the reorientation of one's approach to data so that the concerns and interests of people of African descent become center stage (Shockley & LeNiles, 2018). African-centered education is not the everyday experience of most African American children in public

and private schools in the United States; resultantly, African American children customarily exhibit a lack of awareness of identity, purpose, direction, and the correlation between their education and its impact on their future (Fine, 1991). African-centered education is designed to match African people's cultural needs and interests with African descendants (Shockley & LeNiles, 2018). Afrocentric educationists emphasize culture because it constitutes precisely what is not within textbooks (Shockley and Frederick, 2010). African-centered advocates caution against mismatching African Americans with Eurocentric mainstream education, deeming the mismatch harmful and may cause African Americans to suffer through schooling processes that do not meet their needs (Shockley & LeNiles, 2018).

Afrocentricity is a fundamental concept of many Independent Black Institutions (IBI). Independent Black Institution's educators strive to enable every student to achieve at his or her maximum potential at all times by emphasizing self-expression, high academic achievement, and thinking analytically, critically, and independently (Lomotey, 1992). The three major components of the modern IBI philosophy are a) family hood, b) a set of values called the Nguzo Saba, Kiswahili for *The Seven Principles of Blackness*, and c) Revolutionary Pan-African Nationalism (Lomotey, 1992). The Nguzo Saba, an Afrocentric mentoring paradigm, allows for the characteristics mentioned above to be accomplished by emphasizing seven principles: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith (Sanchez et al., 2017). The Revolutionary Pan-African Nationalism contends that IBIs are part of a new system of education to replace the existing "mainstream" system, to provide a means by which African Americans can identify with Africans around the world, and to

acknowledge the view that African Americans make up a nation within a nation (Lomotey, 1992).

Past research has revealed that there are program and mentor characteristics that may play a role in influencing the effects of mentoring for African American boys (Sanchez et al., 2017). One educational institution, The Benjamin E. Mays Institute, utilizes an Afrocentric mentoring model to counter the effects of academic underachievement among adolescent African American males (Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, & Boyd, 2009). Program characteristics include the cultural tailoring of programs, mentor training, youth-driven approaches, and parental participation (Sanchez et al., 2017). In Afrocentric mentorships and education programs, African American youth and children are encouraged to develop a deep understanding of, respect for, and commitment to themselves and their peers, teachers, parents, leaders, communities, and race (Lomotey, 1992).

Mentoring: Emergence Versus Impact

Mentoring has emerged as the most chosen intervention for behavioral improvement (Tolan et al., 2013). Mentoring has been associated with improved attitudes toward school (Grossman and Tierney, 1998). In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education identified mentoring as a strategy to improve high schools and reduce the dropout rate (*Mentoring*, 2017). According to Parker (1990), the structure of mentoring programs should ensure as much interaction as possible with programs or departments that most affect culturally-diverse students' academic and social lives. Other studies, however, show no statistically significant impact on student outcomes (Berstein et al., 2009). Like the United States, the United Kingdom also witnessed an increase in

mentorships as social intervention (Knowles & Parsons, 2009). The United Kingdom Labor Government has funded and promoted mentoring as a social intervention for disadvantaged youth (Evans, 2005). In 2006, The United Kingdom Department of Education and Skills piloted a peer mentoring program that qualitatively attested to the benefits of mentoring but did not produce impact data showing a positive effect on attendance or behavior (Knowles & Parsons, 2009).

Kings-In-Training Program

The Kings-In-Training program is the mentorship program that is highlighted in this study. The Queens-In-Training program inspired the Kings-In-Training.

Queens-In-Training. Queens-in-Training (QIT) was adapted from the Character Queen program, which began in 2013. The Character Queen program was a character education curriculum designed for 4-year-olds and implemented in daycare centers and elementary schools throughout central Arkansas. QIT would focus on a particular character trait for a month and reinforce its meaning with a catchy poem or song and various activities (music and movement, arts and crafts, recreational game, or storytime). After releasing a book in 2016 (cited below) to copyright the poems used in the program, Ramona Ellison decided to show older girls, particularly those in 4th and 5th grade, what those character words look like in human form. After selecting career paths of interest, Ramona would meet with the girls each week and invite a guest to share their story, a character word for the month, and how that trait impacted his or her life. The program met during the fifth-grade girl's lunchtime. Ramona only had the opportunity to implement the program for one year. Because of a change in position at the school, Ramona couldn't continue the year two program. However, Officer Karen

DiMatteo grabbed the baton and made sure it continued and even duplicated it in other schools where they are still functioning today.

King-In-Training. The Kings-In-Training (KIT) began in the fall of 2016 by Scot Tyler. In previous years, the school had already provided a mentorship for the girls and had yet to provide one for the boys. In the fall of 2016, Scot Tyler became the assistant principal and started the KIT program for fifth-grade African American male students. The mentors that worked along with the program included Albert Dobbins, Austin Lewis, and Teddy Patterson. The program met during recess and lunchtime for approximately 45 minutes. The KIT program curriculum stressed the character and contributions of famous African Americans, character words, cultural awareness, hygiene, parliamentary procedures, public speaking, tying ties, physical education, dining etiquette, and behavior accountability. The program highlighted incentives to promote and reward those who exceeded expectations. The participants were exposed to the Museum of Discovery, Memphis Grizzlies basketball game, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Civil Rights Museum, Arkansas Travelers game, and the Innovation Hub. The KIT had morning duty once a week to meet and greet the car riders by opening their doors of both the cars and the school. Each participant had to adopt a little brother from the kindergarten class. They would often eat lunch with the little brother and read to them.

Hypotheses / Research Questions

This study is a quantitative study, which measures data concerning the relationship between in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students, with and without a mentorship program.

The study is anchored in the following null hypotheses:

H₀1: Mentorship programs will have no effect on in-school suspensions for fifth-grade African American male students.

H₀2: Mentorship programs will have no effect on out-of-school suspension rates for the fifth-grade African American male students.

Specifically, the study will address the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not?
2. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not?
3. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students?
4. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students?
5. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between 2018-19 and 2019-20?

6. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between 2018-19 and 2019-20?

Theoretical Perspective

The theory that informs this study is the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory, developed by Margaret Beale Spencer (1995). The Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST) highlights culturally specific protective factors in fostering healthy development, acknowledging that some of these protective factors emerge as a consequence of experiencing risk conditions (Spencer, Dupree, & Cunningham, 2003). PVEST acknowledges institutional racism, among other systematic and structural forces that serve to confer unearned privilege on some and oppression on others (Spencer et al., 2003). This theory is comprised of five essential components: (a) Risk contributors, (b) net stress engagement, (c) reactive coping methods, (d) coping responses, and (e) emergent identities (Spencer et al., 2003).

Risk contributors, the first component, consist of factors like violence or associated psychosocial stressors that may cause an individual's vulnerability to adverse outcomes, such as poor health, incarceration, and self-destructive behavior (Spencer et al., 2003). Whether it's unemployment, poverty, lack of community support and role models, dysfunctional or troubled home life leading to violence and mental illness, nearly all measures relay that African American men and boys suffer disproportionately from various life-hindering factors (Majors & Weiner, 1997). Net stress engagement denotes the net experience of situations that both challenge and helps cope with one's psychosocial identity and well-being (Spencer et al., 2003). By the time African

American males reach their teenage years, or some even younger, the cumulative stress factors and engagement lead to behaviors that harbor mistrust, frustration, and doubt (Majors & Weiner, 1997). Reactive coping methods, the next component, are employed to resolve dissonance-producing situations and include strategies to solve problems that can lead to either adaptive or maladaptive solutions (Spencer et al., 2003). The fourth component's coping responses become stable and, coupled together, yield emergent identities (Spencer et al., 2003). The final component, emergent identities, defines how individuals view themselves, laying the foundation for future perception and behavior, thus yielding productive outcomes including good health, positive relationships, and high self-esteem (Spencer et al., 2003). The risk factors that African American males faced consequently make them emerge as one of American society's most troubled parts (Majors & Weiner, 1997). African American males begin to emerge and produce an identity viewed as negative and self-destructive values and attitudes (Majors & Weiner, 1997).

The PVEST assumes to integrate salient issues of context and development (Spencer et al., 2003). These issues include socioeconomic conditions, socio-cultural expectations, and socio-historical processes, in which all can be associated with violence and pose threats to healthy development (Spencer et al., 2003). It proposes a process-oriented, development-emphasizing framework designed to describe an individual's life course development (Spencer et al., 2003).

The principles of the PVEST can be applied to the elements of the research question and inform the research in several ways. The study hypothesizes whether mentorship programs in urban settings will affect in-school suspensions and out-of-

school suspensions for fifth-grade African American male students. The theory underscores the need to understand specific challenges and resources facing African American youth males when intervening with a mentorship program (Spencer et al., 2003).

This study's school is located in an urban city with a crime rate that was 83% higher than the national average in 2019. Violent crimes were 122% higher than the national average, with citizens having a 1 in 22 chance of becoming victims of crime. The year-to-year crime rate has increased nine percent over the previous year (AreaVibes, 2020). Compared to others from advantaged families, youth from problematic family backgrounds are exposed to degrees of dysfunctionality – without tools and support -- that hinder their ability to develop necessary life-skills (Blechman, 1992). The school also has a 100% free and reduced lunch eligibility rate, with 10 percent of the students considered homeless. Single mothers with poverty-level incomes and many psychosocial issues often lead the homes of families with high-risk children and adolescents living in underclass neighborhoods (Blechman, 1992).

African American males often carry background issues that further get agitated with harassment by authoritative figures, such as teachers in school or police officers in public (Majors & Weiner, 1997). Even teacher education programs have acknowledged the need to prepare prospective teachers in ways that support equitable and just educational experiences for all students (Ladsen-Billings, 2016). Moreover, PVEST underscores the role of unique and culturally specific protective factors in fostering healthy development, acknowledging that some of these protective factors emerge from experiencing risk conditions.

The Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory argues that the mentorship attends to the strengths of the youth. Simultaneously, the mentorship should celebrate and support those strengths to build trust with youth and reinforce success. Similarly, mentorship interventions that help youth better understand broader systems of privilege and oppression can help marginalized groups avoid making incorrect assumptions about their undervalued place in society (Spencer 1995). Lastly, PVEST concerns youths' lived experiences, explicitly distinguishing the intentions of interventions and youths' actual experiences (Sanchez et al., 2017).

Summary

The literature review for this quantitative study began with an assessment of natural mentorship versus planned mentoring. In comparison to planned mentoring, natural mentoring relationships are much more likely to involve race or ethnicity (Zimmerman et al., 2005).

The literature proceeded with the comparison of school-based versus community-based mentorship programs. The outcome showed higher ratings of relationship quality and mentors' support among youth in the community-based program (Cavell et al., 2009). However, the review focused on the advantages and disadvantages of the school-based programs. Some of the advantages include, but are not limited to, more excellent structure and supervision, a lower threat for unethical relationships, and generous school personnel support (Komosa-Hawkins, 2010; Portwood et al., 2005). The review discovered that the main disadvantage is the school's time constraints, such as school schedule and calendar, which yields a lesser opportunity to form a necessary bond (Komosa-Hawkins, 2010).

Next, the review examined same-race mentorships programs. Though same-race mentorship programs contribute to a person's self-efficacy (Watson, 2012), matching by gender, race, or ethnicity does not impact the mentoring relationship's success (Hughes, Welsh, Mayer, Bolay, & Southard, 2009). Yet, some mentorship programs such as *Call Me Mister* advocate for same-race mentorships.

The review concluded with an exploration of the concept of Afrocentricity in mentorship programs. Practitioners serving African American male youth have often developed and implemented Afrocentric, culturally tailored mentoring programs (Sanchez et al., 2017).

All of the themes mentioned above are relevant to this study. The purpose of this study is to determine if there were any relationship between the number of suspensions and participation in the Kings-In-Training mentorship program involving fifth-grade African American male students in an urban school district located in central Arkansas.

The King-In-Training is a formal, school-based, same-race, Afrocentric mentorship program designed to affect attendance, behavior, and academics positively.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study is to determine if there was any relationship between the number of suspensions and participation in a mentorship program involving fifth-grade African American male students in an urban school district located in central Arkansas.

This study is a quantitative study that will measure data concerning the relationship between in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students with and without a mentorship program.

The study is anchored upon the following null hypotheses:

H₀1: Mentorship programs will have no effect on in-school suspension rates for fifth-grade African American male students, and

H₀2: Mentorship programs will have no effect on out-of-school suspension rates for the fifth-grade African American male students.

Specifically, the study will address the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not?
2. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not?
3. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students?

4. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students?
5. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years?
6. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years?

Participant(s)

This study's participants were fifth-grade African American male and female students from an urban district located in central Arkansas during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. The particular elementary school was 93% African American and qualified for 100% free and reduced lunch. There was a total of 91 students in this study.

Sampling method.

The study used convenience sampling and archival data. This approach is often used in education research due to the structure of our educational system. All members of these selected groups have similar characteristics.

In the 2018-19 school year, the school had two different sections of a fifth-grade class who took the same instructors and had the same classes within the week. The study consisted of 19 fifth-grade African American male students combined from both sections. After obtaining parental permission, the Kings-In-Training mentorship intervention was given to 10 males assigned to one section. The other section, which contained nine males,

did not receive the intervention. Likewise, in the 2019-20 school year, the school had two different sections of a fifth-grade class who took the same instructors and had the same classes within the week. The researcher combined 23 fifth-grade African American male students from both sections. After obtaining parental permission, the Kings-In-Training mentorship intervention was given to 16 males assigned to one section. The other section, which contained seven males, did not receive the intervention. There was a combined total of 49 fifth-grade African American females in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years.

The mentorship program participants received a 45-minute intervention with the Kings-In-Training program every other week as they met during their recess and lunchtime. Because of Covid-19 concerns, the program ceased in March 2020.

Research Design

This research is a quantitative study that is considered quasi-experimental because although there was an active independent variable, the recruits were not randomly assigned to the two groups (Gliner, Morgan, and Leech, 2017). This quasi-experimental approach study will attempt to identify the nature and degree of the relationship between a mentorship intervention and whether there is a direct impact on in-school suspensions or out-of-school suspensions. The researcher chose 10 African American 5th-grade males to receive the mentorship intervention for the 2018-19 school year and 16 selected for the 2019-20 school year.

During the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, the Kings-In-Training program set up an informational booth during the open house to share its goals and values with families and the community. The information presented the program as an intervention to

support attendance and discipline. The documents also highlighted vital components of social development, such as proper communication, character, hygiene, responsibility, and understanding the importance of parliamentary procedures. Parents or guardians could sign their child up without a teacher referral during the open house or when they registered their child for school. A teacher or an administrator referral selected all other participants; however, no child could participate without a parent's signature.

For the school year 2018-19, there were 19 African American males in the fifth-grade class. Ten African-American males were selected to receive the mentorship, while the other nine did not receive the intervention. Seven of the 10 African-American males were selected via parent sign-up, and the faculty/staff referred the remaining three. For the school year 2019-20, there were a total of 23 African American males in the fifth-grade class. There were 16 African-American males selected to receive the mentorship, while the other seven did not receive the intervention. Eleven of the 16 African-American males were selected via parent sign-up, and the faculty/staff referred the remaining five.

After approval by the IRB, data regarding the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years will be obtained from the eSchoolPLUS report of the fifth-grade African American students and entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Students who participated in the Kings-In-Training mentorship program will be identified; then, all student names will be erased. The data from the Excel spreadsheet will then be imported into SPSS 25 for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics will be computed for the various groups to be analyzed, and the independent t-test will be used to determine if a significant statistical difference exists between groups.

A level of significance of .05 will be used to determine whether the null hypothesis should be rejected.

Instrumentation

The instrument of measurement for this study will be the behavior report generated by the eSchoolPLUS, a comprehensive student information management solution that provides powerful tools for teachers, administrators, parents, and students (Powerschool, 2020). Designed for administrators, PowerSchool eSchoolPlus SIS makes it easier to manage the entire flow of district information, including demographics, scheduling, attendance, discipline, testing, report cards, and transcripts (PowerSchool, 2020). According to Powerschool.com (2020), who also has the copyright for eSchoolPlus, the company has been in existence for over 20 years. The eSchoolPlus system is web-based that has copyright protection with Powerschool.

Teachers will use this secure electronic software system to create behavior referrals. Administrators will use this same system to determine disciplinary actions, including in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions.

Statistical Analysis

Research question 1 asks if there is a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not. This question will be answered using an independent t-test. The independent variable is participation in the mentoring program, and the dependent variable is the number of in-school suspensions.

Research question 2 asks if there is a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who

participated in a mentoring program and those who did not. This will be answered using an independent t-test. The independent variable is participation in the mentoring program, and the dependent variable is the number of out-of-school suspensions.

Research question 3 asks if there is a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students. This will also be answered using an independent t-test. The independent variable is participation in the mentoring program, and the dependent variable is the number of in-school suspensions.

Research question 4 asks if there is a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students. This question will be answered using an independent t-test. The independent variable is participation in the mentoring program, and the dependent variable is the number of out-of-school suspensions.

Research question 5 asks if there is a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. This question will be answered using an independent t-test. The independent variable is the school year, and the dependent variable is the number of in-school suspensions.

Research question 6 asks if there is a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. This question will

be answered using an independent t-test. The independent variable is the school year, and the dependent variable is the number of out-of-school suspensions.

Research Ethics

The researcher assured the participants in the study confidentiality took proper procedures to ensure data privacy and security. The “Ethical Issues Checklist” demonstrated ethical considerations (Patton, 2015, p. 496). Before the study, the researcher explained the study's purpose and emphasized the right to terminate involvement and know the results. The data collected for this educational research will be archival and can release de-identified student records without parental consent (USDOE, 2015). The participants will not be at risk. The researcher has permission from the superintendent and the student information systems manager to access data.

Summary

This chapter outlined the research methods used to measure the hypothesis answer the six guiding questions of this quantitative study, which explored whether mentorship programs will affect in-school suspensions or out-of-school suspensions rates for fifth-grade African American male students. The chapter presented this study's participants for both the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years and the use of convenience sampling and archival data as the sampling method. The chapter also includes the quasi-experimental research design and presented eSchoolPlus as the instrument for obtaining the behavior report. This chapter concludes with the statistical analysis restating the research questions and the type of test utilized to get the data.

Chapter 4: Results

African American males disproportionately encounter 67 percent more out-of-school suspensions among other exclusionary discipline practices than other racial groups (Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002; McNeely, Nonemaker & Blum, 2002; Wald & Kurlaender, 2003; Brooks, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 1999). Mentoring programs are a popular tool that schools use to improve behavioral, social, attitudinal, and academic outcomes in developing African American males (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011). More specifically, African-centered mentoring programs often positively affect exclusionary discipline practices by addressing African-American students' concerns and interests (Shockley & LeNiles, 2018). Tierney, Grossman, and Resch (1995) suggested that mentor/mentee matching criteria should include same-race matches, if possible, among other criteria. Some researchers highly recommend school-based mentoring programs due to the many benefits such as low cost, convenience, and low threat of unethical relationships in the school setting (Portwood et al., 2005). Though there is much community enthusiasm about mentoring, the lack of evidential impact has caused skepticism and hesitant financial support (Belchman, 1992). Since a planned, school-based, same-sex, same-gender, Afrocentric mentorship provides many benefits to African American males, the researcher sought to study how the KIT mentorship affects exclusionary discipline practices.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was any relationship between the number of suspensions and participation in the KIT mentorship program involving fifth-grade African American male students in an urban school district located in central

Arkansas. The researcher utilized six research questions to determine the effect that the KIT mentorship had on in-school and out-of-school suspensions.

In this chapter, the researcher will present the results from the data analysis to determine if there was a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years based on participation in a mentorship program. To examine the data, the researcher utilized IBM Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) analysis software to run an independent t-test and Mann-Whitney test on the eSchoolPlus Cognos report for ISS and OSS of students assigned and not assigned to the KIT program to seek answers to the following questions.

Q1. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not?

Q2. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not?

Q3. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students?

Q4. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students?

Q5. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years?

Q6. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years?

Description of Sample

The researcher selected one elementary school located within an urban school district in central Arkansas for school years 2018-19 and 2019-20 and did not include any other schools or school districts for the study. The elementary school served approximately 319 and 312 students for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school year, respectively, in grades K through fifth grade. In 2018-19, the fifth-grade had 49 students enrolled, of which 40 of those students, 21 females, and 19 males, were African American. In 2019-20, the fifth-grade had 56 students enrolled, of which 51 of those students, 28 females, and 23 females, were African American.

The researcher was a district-level employee and therefore had permission and the authority to obtain data from the eschool Cognos system.

Results

The researcher studied whether mentorships would affect in-school suspensions or out-of-school suspensions. Consequently, the researcher analyzed data for six research questions using the independent t-test and the Mann-Whitney test.

Research Question 1

Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not?

The null hypothesis for research question 1 states that there is no significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not. The alternative hypothesis states there is a significant difference. The researcher tested the null hypothesis by examining data for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. Table 4.1 presents an overview of the data analysis for this question. There were 26 fifth-grade African American male students who received the KIT mentoring program and 16 students who did not. The students who received KIT mentoring had a mean of .27 ($SD = .827$) in-school suspensions, while the students who did not receive the mentoring had a mean of .00 ($SD = .000$) in-school suspensions.

Since at least one group had an n value less than 30, the researcher performed a Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups. There was no significant difference between the group who received KIT mentoring (mean rank = 22.42) and the group that did not (mean rank = 20.00), $U = 184$, $z = -1.392$, $p = .164$. Since $p > .05$, the results yield no significant difference in the number of absences due to ISS between fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT and those who did not.

Table 4.1 In-school suspensions of male students

	N	Mean	Mean Rank	U	Sig.
Mentoring	26	.27	22.42	184.0	.164
No Mentoring	16	.00	20.00		

Research Question 2

Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not?

The null hypothesis for research question 2 states that there is no significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not. The alternative hypothesis states there is a significant difference. The researcher tested the null hypothesis by examining data for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. Table 4.2 presents an overview of the data analysis for this question. There were 26 fifth-grade African American male students who received the KIT mentoring program and 16 students who did not. The students who received KIT mentoring had a mean of .42 ($SD = .809$) out-of-school suspensions, while the students who did not receive the mentoring had a mean of .13 ($SD = 0.500$) out-of-school suspensions. Since at least one group had an n value less than 30, the researcher performed a Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups. There was no significant difference between the group who received KIT mentoring (mean rank = 23.10) and fifth-grade African American male students (mean rank = 18.91), $U = 166$, $z = -1.570$, $p = .116$. Since $p > .05$, the results yield that there is no significant difference in the number of absences due to OSS between fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT and fifth-grade African American male students.

Table 4.2 Out-of-school suspensions of male students

	N	Mean	Mean Rank	U	Sig.
Mentoring	26	.42	23.10	166.5	.116
No Mentoring	16	.13	18.91		

Research Question 3

Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students?

The null hypothesis for research question 3 states that there is no significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students. The alternative hypothesis states there is a significant difference. The researcher tested the null hypothesis by examining data for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. Table 4.3 presents an overview of the data analysis for this question. There were 26 fifth-grade African American male students who received the KIT mentoring program and 49 fifth-grade African American female students. The students who received KIT mentoring had a mean of .27 ($SD = .827$) in-school suspensions, while the fifth-grade African American female students had a mean of .06 ($SD = .242$) in-school suspensions. Since at least one group had an n value less than 30, the researcher performed a Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups. There was no significant difference between the group who received KIT mentoring (mean rank = 39.44) and the female group (mean rank = 37.23), $U = 599.5$, $z = -.888$, $p = .375$. Since $p > .05$, the results yield no significant difference in the number of absences due to ISS between fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT and fifth-grade African American female students.

Table 4.3 In-school suspensions of KIT males and female participants

	N	Mean	Mean Rank	U	Sig.
Male	26	.27	39.44	599.5	.375
Female	49	.06	37.23		

Research Question 4

Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students?

The null hypothesis for research question 4 states that there is no significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students. The alternative hypothesis states there is a significant difference. The researcher tested the null hypothesis by examining data for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. Table 4.4 presents an overview of the data analysis for this question. There were 26 fifth-grade African American male students who received the KIT mentoring program and 49 fifth-grade African American female students. The male students who received KIT mentoring had a mean of .42 ($SD = .809$) out-of-school suspensions, while the fifth-grade African American female students had a mean of .37 ($SD = 1.074$) out-of-school suspensions. Since at least one group had an n value less than 30, the researcher performed a Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups. There was no significant difference between the group who received KIT mentoring (mean rank = 40.40) and the female group (mean rank = 37.23), $U = 574.5$, $z = -.997$, $p = .319$. Since $p > .05$, the results yield no significant difference in the number of absences due to OSS between fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT and fifth-grade African American female students.

Table 4.4 Out-of-school suspensions of KIT males and female participants

	N	Mean	Mean Rank	U	Sig.
Male	26	.42	40.40	574.500	.319
Female	49	.37	37.23		

Research Question 5

Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years?

The null hypothesis for research question 5 states that there is no significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program in 2018-19 and those who participated in the mentoring program in 2019-20. The alternative hypothesis states there is a significant difference. The researcher tested the null hypothesis by examining data for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. Table 4.5 presents an overview of the data analysis for this question. Ten fifth-grade African American male students received the KIT mentoring program in 2018-19, and 16 students received the mentoring program in 2019-20. The students who received KIT mentoring in 2018-19 had a mean of .00 ($SD = .000$) in-school suspensions, while the students who received the KIT mentoring in 2019-20 had a mean of .44 ($SD = 1.031$) in-school suspensions.

Since at least one group had an n value less than 30, the researcher performed a Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups. There was no significant difference between the group who received KIT mentoring in 2018-19 (mean rank = 12) and the group that received in 2019-20 (mean rank = 14.44), $U = 65$, $z = -1.425$, $p = .154$. Since $p > .05$, the results yield no significant

difference in the number of absences due to ISS between fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT mentoring in 2018-19 and those who received KIT in 2019-20.

Table 4.5 In-school suspensions of males in a mentoring program in two years

	N	Mean	Mean Rank	U	Sig.
2018-2019	10	.00	12	65	.154
2019-2020	16	.44	14.44		

Research Question 6

Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years?

The null hypothesis for research question 6 states that there is no significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program in 2018-19 and those who participated in the mentoring program in 2019-20. The alternative hypothesis states there is a significant difference. The researcher tested the null hypothesis by examining data for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. Table 4.6 presents an overview of the data analysis for this question. Ten fifth-grade African American male students received the KIT mentoring program in 2018-19, and 16 students received the mentoring program in 2019-20. The students who received KIT mentoring in 2018-19 had a mean of .40 ($SD = .699$) out-of-school suspensions, while the students who received the KIT mentoring in 2019-20 had a mean of .44 ($SD = .892$) in-school suspensions.

Since at least one group had an n value less than 30, the researcher performed a Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there was a significant difference between the two

groups. There was no significant difference between the group who received KIT mentoring in 2018-19 (mean rank = 13.75) and the group that received in 2019-20 (mean rank = 13.34), $U = 77.5$, $z = -.169$, $p = .87$. Since $p > .05$, the results yield no significant difference in the number of absences due to OSS between fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT mentoring in 2018-19 and those who received KIT in 2019-20.

Table 4.6 Out-of-school suspensions of males in a mentoring program in two years

	N	Mean	Mean Rank	U	Sig.
2018-2019	10	.40	13.75	77.5	.87
2019-2020	16	.44	13.34		

Summary

The Mann-Whitney test for the six research questions indicated no significant differences that the KIT mentorship program had on in-school suspensions (ISS) and out-of-school suspensions (OSS). Research questions one and two measured the significant difference in the number of ISS and OSS for fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT mentorship and those who did not. Research questions three and four measured the significant difference in the number of ISS and OSS for fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT mentorship and fifth-grade African American females. Finally, research questions five and six measured the significant difference in the number of ISS and OSS for fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT mentorship in 2019 with those who received it in 2020.

For research question one, the researcher performed an independent t-test and Mann-Whitney test. The researcher found no significant difference in the number of ISS for fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT and those who did not.

For research question two, the researcher performed an independent t-test and Mann-Whitney test. The researcher found no significant difference in the number of OSS for fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT and those who did not.

For research question three, the researcher performed an independent t-test and Mann-Whitney test. The researcher found no significant difference in the number of ISS for fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT and fifth-grade African American female students.

For research question four, the researcher performed an independent t-test and Mann-Whitney test. The researcher found no significant difference in the number of OSS for fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT and fifth-grade African American female students.

For research question five, the researcher performed an independent t-test and Mann-Whitney test. The researcher found no significant difference in the number of ISS for fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT in 2019 and those who received KIT in 2020.

For research question six, the researcher performed an independent t-test and Mann-Whitney test. The researcher found no significant difference in the number of OSS for fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT in 2019 and those who received KIT in 2020.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if there was any relationship between the number of suspensions and participation in a mentorship program involving fifth-grade African American male students in an urban school district located in central Arkansas.

The researcher studied the Kings-In-Training (KIT) program, a planned, community-based, same-race, same-gender, Afrocentric mentorship for African-American males.

Planned mentorships provide opportunities for a racial and ethnic group such as African American males who have experienced societal racism, lack of access to social resources, and inadequate educational preparation during their lifetime (Redmond, 1990).

According to Komosa-Hawkins (2010), school-based mentorships typically require less time commitment; consequently, this works well for the KIT program, which meets during lunch and recess time. The researcher wanted to investigate whether same-race, same-gender mentorships are ineffective, as Dubois and collaborators declared (2002).

The Afrocentric KIT program used an African American model as the public speaking component as the participants made presentations on famous African Americans. The researcher investigated whether the planned, community-based, same-race, same-gender, Afrocentric mentorship affected the number of suspensions for the African American male students.

This chapter outlines the limitations that may have affected the results, the ethical considerations, and the restatement of research questions and hypotheses. The remaining part of this chapter will summarize the results of research questions, interpretations and conclusions, suggestions for the future, and a summary of conclusions.

Limitations

The study was limited in its sampling selection. The researcher only studied the Kings-In-Training mentorship program. Another limitation is that the study took place within one specific school in an urban school district located in central Arkansas. Participants (n=91) in this study were all traditional, fifth-grade African American male and female youths. Because of the number of participants in the study and the single location, the results presented may not be generalizable to other public schools. The results can only suggestively pertain to the general education community. The Kings-In-Training mentorship program is a relatively small and recent program with a short history, and the results may vary per state and district.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher was careful to maintain all ethical standards during the process. The data collected for this educational research was archival. According to the United States Department of Education (2015), the policy allowed the retrieval of de-identified student records without parental consent. The participants were never at risk. As a district employer, the researcher had permission from the superintendent and the student information systems manager. The electronic and tangible data retrieved from this study are kept for seven years and then deleted, shredded, or burned. The participant's identifiable information remained private.

The researcher answered the following research questions and hypothesis respectively:

Q1. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not?

Q2. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and those who did not?

Q3. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students?

Q4. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program and fifth-grade African American female students?

Q5. Is there a significant difference in the number of in-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years?

Q6. Is there a significant difference in the number of out-of-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who participated in a mentoring program between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years?

The researcher tested the following hypotheses:

H₀1: Mentorship programs will have no effect on in-school suspensions rates for fifth-grade African American male students, and

H₀2: Mentorship programs will have no effect on out-of-school suspension rates for the fifth-grade African American male students.

This chapter will summarize the results, interpret the findings, the suggestions for the future, and summarize the major conclusions.

Summary of Results

The researcher expanded on the limited research related to mentorship programs' impact on fifth-grade African American students' suspensions. The study addressed six questions related to the difference in the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions of fifth-grade African American male students who received the KIT intervention and those who did not. To answer the questions, the researcher utilized results from an eSchoolPlus Cognos report for ISS and OSS for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. The researcher conducted an independent t-test and Mann-Whitney test on all data to determine statistically significant changes in ISS and OSS.

In Chapter Three, the researcher defined how the independent t-test presents descriptive statistics and the significance level for acceptance or rejection of hypotheses. If the number of data in a group was less than 30, the researcher used a Mann-Whitney test to determine if a significant difference existed between the two groups. The variables included the fifth-grade African American males in KIT, those who are not in KIT, fifth-grade African American females, and the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years.

RQ 1. During the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, the study tracked the number of in-school suspensions (ISS) for 26 fifth-grade African American male students who received the KIT mentoring program and 16 fifth-grade African American male students who did not. The researcher conducted an independent-samples t-test and a Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there were significant differences in the number of in-school suspensions between fifth-grade African American male students who received

KIT and those who did not. Both tests yield no significant difference in ISS between fifth-grade African American males who received KIT and those who did not.

RQ 2. During the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, the study tracked the number of out-of-school suspensions (OSS) for 26 fifth-grade African American male students who received the KIT mentoring program and 16 fifth-grade African American male students who did not. The researcher conducted an independent-samples t-test and a Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there were significant differences in the number of OSS between fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT and those who did not. Both test results indicated no significant difference in OSS between fifth-grade African American males who received KIT and those who did not.

RQ3. During the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, the study tracked the number of in-school suspensions (ISS) for 26 fifth-grade African American male students who received the KIT mentoring program and 49 fifth-grade African American female students. The researcher conducted an independent-samples t-test and a Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there were significant differences in the number of ISS between fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT and the fifth-grade African American females. Both test results indicated no significant difference in ISS between fifth-grade African American males who received KIT and the fifth-grade African American females.

RQ4. During the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, the study tracked the number of out-of-school suspensions (OSS) for 26 fifth-grade African American male students who received the KIT mentoring program and 49 fifth-grade African American female students. The researcher conducted an independent-samples t-test and a Mann-Whitney

U test to determine if there were significant differences in the number of OSS between fifth-grade African American males who received KIT and the fifth-grade African American females. Both test results indicated no significant difference in OSS between fifth-grade African American males who received KIT and the fifth-grade African American females.

RQ5. During the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, the study tracked the number of in-school suspensions (ISS) for 10 fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT in 2018-19 and 16 fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT in 2019-20. The researcher conducted an independent-samples t-test and a Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there were significant differences in the number of ISS between fifth-grade African American males who received KIT in 2019 and those in KIT in 2020. The independent-samples t-test yielded a significant difference in ISS between the fifth-grade African American males in KIT in 2019 and those in KIT in 2020. However, since $n < 30$, then a Mann-Whitney U test was run and indicated no significant difference in ISS between the fifth-grade African American males in KIT of 2019 and those in 2020.

RQ6. During the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years, the study tracked the number of out-of-school suspensions (OSS) for 10 fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT in 2018-19 and 16 fifth-grade African American male students who received KIT in 2019-20. The researcher conducted an independent-samples t-test and a Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there were significant differences in the number of OSS between the fifth-grade African American males in the KIT program in 2019 and 2020. Both test results indicated no significant difference in

the number of absences due to OSS between the fifth-grade African American male students in KIT of 2019 and those in 2020.

By answering the research questions, the researcher tested the following hypotheses:

H₀1: Mentorship programs will have no effect on in-school suspensions rates for fifth-grade African American male students, and

H₀2: Mentorship programs will have no effect on out-of-school suspension rates for the fifth-grade African American male students.

In testing both hypotheses, like other studies, this study's results show that the mentorship program has no statistically significant impact on student outcomes (Berstein et al., 2009).

Interpretations and Conclusions

The researcher compared the variables displayed in Tables 4.1-4.6. It is uncertain why the males in KIT had higher ISS and OSS rates than those not in KIT or the females. The researcher offers the following interpretations and conclusions.

Students who received KIT versus those who did not. The researcher tested the hypotheses by comparing ISS and OSS results for fifth-grade African American male youth who received the KIT mentorship program with those who did not during the 2019-2020 school years. The results suggest that the mentorship program did not affect in-school suspension (ISS) and out-of-school suspensions (OSS).

Students who received KIT versus females. The researcher tested the hypotheses by comparing ISS and OSS results for fifth-grade African American male youth who received the KIT mentorship program with fifth-grade African American female students during the 2019-2020 school years. The results suggest that the

mentorship program did not affect in-school suspension (ISS) and out-of-school suspensions (OSS).

Students in 2019 who received KIT versus those in 2020 who received. The researcher tested the hypotheses by comparing ISS and OSS results for fifth-grade African American male youth who received the KIT mentorship program in 2018-2019 with those during the 2019-2020 school year. The results again suggest that the mentorship program did not affect in-school suspension (ISS) and out-of-school suspensions (OSS).

These findings are consistent with previous research. The literature revealed a significant amount of research about at-risk students and mentoring programs. Although research suggests that mentoring has had a successful impact on student behaviors and attitudes (Jekielek, Moore, & Hair, 2002), evidence from other researchers suggests that the positive impact and improvements in these areas on average were little to modest (DuBois & Karcher, 2013 DuBois et al., 2002). The researcher offers the following recommendations observations conclusions about a planned, school-based, same-race/same-gender, Afro-centric mentorship program.

Planned mentorship. Staff and administrators organized and planned the Kings-In-Training mentorship program to impact the behavior of the fifth-grade African American male students. The parents signed the permission slip to allow their children to participate in the KIT mentorship. As recommended by Bynum (2015), the school assigned a mentor to a mentee or protégé. The planners hoped to offer social resources to impact the number of exclusionary disciplinary practices. Research suggests that the planned mentorship would help advance African Americans who experienced societal

racism, lack of access to social resources, and inadequate educational preparation (Redmond, 1990). Though the students attended the program, the OSS and ISS showed no significant difference.

School-based mentorship. Kings-In-Training mentorship organizers designed the program to meet at school for a 45- minute intervention during lunch and recess every other Wednesday. The organizers hoped the convenient location, space, time, and resources of the school-based design would impact the participants' behaviors. Portwood and others (2005) believe that this convenience, in addition to other benefits, had increased the use of school-based mentorships. Though the program gained popularity and participation, the effects on behavior were not unrealized. The long wait periods between the meeting days weakened the effectiveness of the relationship. Research states that a school-based mentorship program's main disadvantage is its time constraints, which indicate a lesser opportunity to form a necessary bond (Komosa-Hawkins, 2010). Time constraint may be the main reason that one may conclude that the results yielded that the mentorship had no significant difference on ISS and OSS.

Same-race and same-gender mentorship. According to Jones and collaborators (2019), there is a significant shortage of African American male teachers in K-8 public elementary school classrooms. There were only two African American staff members working at the school in this study. Though Komosa-Hawkins (2010) suggests that school personnel are generally willing to offer their time and support for school-based interventions, the same-sex and same-gender design made this attribute a non-factor. This fact caused concern for the mentor/mentee ratio. The program averaged three African American male mentors per meeting who mentored six mentees a piece in 2018-

19 and mentored seven a piece in 2019-20. One may conclude that the ratio contributed to the lack of significance that the mentorship had on ISS or OSS. Also, Hughes (2009) declared that matching by gender, race, or ethnicity does not impact the success of the mentoring relationship.

Afrocentric Education. The Kings-In-Training program presented an Afrocentric model. As Shockley and Frederick recommended (2010), Afro-centric mentors use topics outside of the textbooks to spark African American male students' interest. African-centered education will support African Americans through the schooling process by meeting their needs.

Suggestions for Future Research

The results of this study can assist schools and school districts in developing or designing mentorship programs that will positively impact exclusionary disciplinary actions for African American males. Despite mixed results and views, mentoring programs for at-risk youth are continuing to increase across the United States (Keating et al., 2002). The researcher hopes that this study's findings concerning mentorships will prove effective in meeting the needs of African American male youths who, as Ladson-Billings (2000) reports, are suffering in our schools at an alarming rate. In today's schools, African American male students face over-referral for school disciplinary action and special education (Rowley, Ross, Lozada, Williams, Gale, & Kurtz-Costs, 2014). They continue to experience high drop-out, suspension, and expulsion rates (Ladson-Billings, 2000). According to Aaron (2010), discipline plays a vital role in school success; therefore, future researchers must do more research and planning to develop strategies to make KIT a robust mentoring program.

Strategies for the current population. One strategy that may prove beneficial is to increase the frequency of meeting times. When mentors and mentees meet weekly, it creates more significant opportunities for positive youth outcomes to occur (DeWit, DuBois, Erdem, Larose, Lipman, & Spencer, 2016). One suggestion is to schedule meeting times for at least once or twice a week. Another suggestion would be to consider blending an after-school component as an option to impact academic and behavioral problems (Campbell-Whatley et al., 1997). The key to the strategy is to cause the mentor and mentee to meet with more frequency, time, and duration, which will increase the opportunity to form a necessary bond (Komosa-Hawkins, 2010).

Another strategy will be to collaborate with or convert to a community-based program that has emerged to fill the need to guide African American male youth through the difficult transition to adulthood (Majors & Weiner, 1997). This strategy instituted in KIT may meet the necessary devotion, time, and energy requirements needed from both mentors and improve effectiveness (Harris, 1999).

A final strategy to implement for future endeavors is to deviate from the same-race and gender mentorship program format due to the lack of African American male representation within the school. The Kings-In-Training program was designed based on the theoretical perspective, the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory (PVEST), highlighting culturally specific protective factors in fostering healthy development (Spencer, Dupree, & Cunningham, 2003). The Kings-In-Training mentoring program chose the same-race and same-gender format in consideration of the PVEST, which acknowledges and tries to prevent institutional racism, among other systematic and structural forces that serve to confer unearned privilege on some and

oppression on others (Spencer et al., 2003). Unfortunately, there are only two African American male staff members within the school represented in the study. This shortage is not unique to this school but also in K-8 public elementary school classrooms (Jones, Holton, & Joseph, 2019) all over. Many believe that effective communication is ensured by matching a high-risk, inner-city youngster with a same-race, same-gender mentor; however, research has not provided supporting evidence (Bleachman, 1992). Therefore, it is worth implementing a new strategy that allows a different race or different gender to determine whether it will positively impact the outcome.

Suppose different-race or different-gender mentors are allowed in the future to improve time constraints and to increase human, intellectual, and material resources. In that case, it will be essential that those mentors become acquainted with African-centered education models and understand specific challenges and resources facing African American youth males within the community. The school presented in this study is located in an urban city with a crime rate that was 83% higher than the national average in 2019, violent crimes were 122% higher than the national average, and unfortunately, citizens having a 1 in 22 chance of becoming victims of crime (AreaVibes, 2020). The staggering statistics such as the crime rate and violent crimes are what Spencer and colleagues (2003) refer to as risk contributors, the first component of PVEST, that may cause an individual's vulnerability to adverse outcomes such as poor health, incarceration, and self-destructive behavior. The mentors must have professional development that teaches them how to deal with youth from problematic family backgrounds and who are exposed to degrees of dysfunctionality--without tools and support-- that hinder their ability to develop necessary life-skills (Bleachman, 1992). According to Lomotey (1992),

concerning African-centered education, the different-race or different-gender mentor should strive to enable every African American male student to achieve his maximum potential by emphasizing self-expression, high academic achievement, and analytical, critical, and independent thinking. Finally, per the Phenomenological Variant of Ecological Systems Theory, the different-sex or different-gender mentor must acknowledge institutional racism and other systematic and structural forces (Spencer et al., 2003).

Future researchers may want to explore beyond this study's population's setting and size in light of prior research and the results of this study. The researcher recommends the following studies.

Strategies for exploratory populations. Future researchers may consider using a larger sample size. One may consider more schools within the same district, other schools within the state, or even schools outside the state. Future researchers can compare and contrast the results to determine whether the findings are unique or similar.

Secondly, future researchers may present KIT in a more affluent area where the crime rate is not as high. According to Spencer and colleagues (2003), home life can offer children unbearable risk contributors that may cause self-destructive behavioral issues too overwhelmingly challenging to overcome. The same study with the current design may indicate different outcomes with a more affluent area.

Finally, future researchers may also present KIT to involve other ethnicities. The KIT mentors promoted the mentorship to all parents and students of different ethnicities. The researcher did not include the data of the non-African American students who participated in KIT in this study. A future researcher may include the non-African

American data as a comparative variable in a research question. On the other hand, a future researcher may choose to present KIT to a school with higher percentages of different ethnicities and then compare and contrast the results.

Summary of Conclusions

School districts often look to mentorship programs to help African American males since high-risk environments receive minimal supportive services and little media attention except to reaffirm assumptions of group deviance and psychopathology (Spencer, 1995). Mentoring programs have been shown to improve behavioral, social, attitudinal, and academic outcomes in developing at-risk American youth (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011).

After examining the findings from the research questions and hypotheses of this quantitative study, the results conclusively yield that the mentorship program did not affect in-school suspensions (ISS) and out-of-school suspensions (OSS). This study's major conclusions are the ineffectiveness of same-sex, same-gender mentorship programs and the concern with time constraints of the school-based mentorship programs.

The findings conclude that same-race, same-gender mentors do not significantly impact disciplinary data for African American males who participate in a mentorship program. Kings-In-Training is a planned mentorship that presented an African-centered education model, which also featured a same-race, same-gender mentor concept.

According to Watson (2012), mentors and mentees develop a productive and meaningful relationship by bonding around the shared experience of race; however, the school only had two African American male staff members in the 2018-19 school year and only one in the 2019-20 school year. The other non-school staff volunteers had limited time

available, thus, creating a consistent ratio was six mentees to one mentor. Because of the lack of available same-race, same-gender mentors available, it was suggested to allow different races or different gender as an adjusted program concept. With this adjustment, the school-based mentorship can maximize its fullest potential of attracting more staff members' involvement concerning excellent structure, supervision, ideas, and strategies (Komosa-Hawkins, 2010). This switch to permit different race or gender may have the same or positive affect, since Bleachman (1992), Dubois and collaborators (2002), and Hughes and colleagues (2009) stated that matching by gender, race, or ethnicity does not impact the success of the mentoring relationship.

The research concluded that time constraints might be the primary reason the mentorship did not affect in-school and out-of-school suspensions. According to Harris (1999), the more time commitment within mentorships, the more effective it becomes. If more staff can become involved by converting to a different-sex, different gender, then the possibility of increasing the frequency of meeting times becomes more achievable. Partnering with a community-based after-school mentorship program may also offer the extra time needed to positively impact student behavior.

Future researchers may choose to explore beyond the population, demographics, and location used in this study. One may consider using a larger sample size, a more affluent area where the crime rate is not as high, or even involve other ethnicities. Finally, the researcher can compare and contrast the results of new study groups with the current study.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Letter of Exemption



**Office of Sponsored Programs
and University Initiatives**

Administration Building, Room 207
1509 North Boulder Avenue
Russellville, Arkansas 72801

Office: 479-880-4327
www.atu.edu

January 19, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

The Arkansas Tech University Institutional Review Board has deemed the application for Scot Tyler's proposed research, entitled "The Impact of Mentorship Programs on the Behaviors of Fifth-Grade African American Male Students," to be exempt under category 4. Research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the exempt categories defined by the federal regulations are given an exempt determination rather than IRB approval. Thus, no IRB approval number has been assigned to this study. The Chair approves for the researcher(s) to proceed with the class project.

Please note that, in the event that any of the parameters of the study change, the researcher may be required to submit an amended application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Gordon".

Sarah Gordon, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair
Arkansas Tech University



