COLLEGE BOUND BROTHERHOOD:
INTERRUPTING THE CRIMINALIZATION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN
BOYS IN THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

by

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A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctorate in Education

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership for Social Justice
California State University, East Bay
2016
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Abstract

African American male students have been marginalized and criminalized for years in the American public school system, leading to low academic performances, low engagement in school, and high dropout rates. This study examined College Bound Brotherhood, a wraparound program in the Hayward Unified School District being implemented to interrupt the systemic failures of the American educational system. According to Hayward High School, students participating in College Bound Brotherhood have shown positive outcomes in discipline, academic, and attendance data, and graduation rates have increased dramatically. Using a lens of labeling theory and minority threat theory, a case study approach was used examine the lived experiences of African American boys enrolled in a case management program being that have led to this growth. Findings revealed that building relationships, creating a college going culture, and parent empowerment was important in increasing student achievement and other positive outcomes. Even though the program faced adversity, it was still able to set students on a path to college and a career, help them to build meaningful relationships with mentors, involve their parents in the school community and empower them, change their self-perceptions, and build their leadership skills and capacity.

Keywords: Criminalization, deficit thinking, exclusionary discipline practices, case management
California State University, East Bay
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership for Social Justice

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: INTERRUPTING THE CRIMINALIZATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN BOYS IN THE AMERICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM ...................................................... 1

- The Problem .................................................................................. 2
- Historical Context .......................................................................... 4
- Attempts to Interrupt Criminalization ........................................... 7
- Purpose of the Study ....................................................................... 9
- Case Management .......................................................................... 10
- Research Question .......................................................................... 12

Chapter 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ........................................... 13

- Culture and Schooling .................................................................. 14
- Exclusionary Practices .................................................................. 18
- The Need for Engagement ............................................................... 22
- Conclusions ................................................................................... 27
- Theoretical Framework .................................................................. 28
- Labeling Theory ............................................................................ 28
- Minority Threat ............................................................................. 29

Chapter 3: METHODS ......................................................................... 30

- Research Question .......................................................................... 30
- Research Design ............................................................................. 31
- Sample Population and Selection Criteria ...................................... 32
- Setting ............................................................................................. 32
- College Bound Brotherhood ............................................................ 34
TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: HUSD Graduation Rate by Ethnicity ................................. 34
TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1: CAASPP Data 2015 .............................................. 34
African American male students have been marginalized for years in the American public school system, leading to low academic performances, low engagement in school, and high dropout rates for African American males. This is detrimental to our society because often these males, due to systematic racism in schools, become unemployable and involved in the criminal justice system. We must pay attention to this phenomenon because our society has begun to see African American males as disposable. We see them incarcerated, unemployed, and often victims of violence, such as recent young men featured in the media, murdered by police who should be protecting them as citizens of our country. There have been a multitude of implementations to address this marginalization in the K-12 system, such as Positive Behavior and Intervention Support (“Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports”, n.d.) and Restorative Justice (Center for Justice and Reconciliation, 2015). In addition, there are a variety of theories to attempt to understand and explain our society’s criminalization of African American boys, such as minority threat theory (Blalock, 1967) and labeling theory (Ferguson, 2010).

Hayward Unified School District has begun to address the concerns of this trend by implementing a number of policies and practices to address these students. Although the district has seen a number of improvements around discipline data, African American males are still overrepresented in the discipline system and continue to achieve at lower academic levels than all subgroups except for Latinos. As African American students
approach graduation age, there is a need to prepare them to become college and career ready. To meet this need, Hayward High School has implemented a case management wraparound program, College Bound Brotherhood, to support this need. Since the program’s implementation, students participating in College Bound Brotherhood have shown positive outcomes in discipline, academics, and attendance. The current study will examine the experiences of African American males involved in this program to investigate how the experiences are helping to interrupt the status quo.

The Problem

Systemic factors such as exclusionary practices and cultural deficit thinking, combined with African American historical antecedents of slavery and denial of human and civil rights, create a propensity for the disenfranchisement of African American males, and ultimately a criminalization of their behaviors, that exclude them from participation in the educational system of the United States. For the purposes of this study, I will use Kimberly’s (2014) definition of the criminalization of African American boys, who wrote that when black children “are dehumanized to such an extent that they aren’t perceived as children at all. They are assumed to be older, less innocent and inherently guilty” they are criminalized (Kimberley, “Black Agenda Report,” n.d.).

Schools are a microcosm of society (Bourdieu, 1997), meaning that the school is representative of the society as a whole. The same issues and prejudices that exist in society are represented on a smaller scale in schools. Therefore, it is important that we thoroughly examine this problem and seek to rectify the systemic failures that are pushing African American boys out of the school system (Kunjufu, 2005). The criminalization of African American boys in schools is a result of a perceived threat of African Americans to the white society (Thompson, 2011), as noted by the theory of minority threat.
This theory states that social control of minorities will be more severe based on the amount of the perceived threat that they are to the majority, who have arrived at their prejudice based on a perceived threat to them by the minority group (Brick, 2009). The majority group’s perception of threat from minority groups would cause them to need to keep African American males under its control, and to do so, they criminalize them through exclusionary practices such as school disciplinary actions, arrests, and eventual incarceration. These practices exclude certain types of students from the educational system, as illustrated by zero tolerance policies, which are “school or district-wide policies that mandate predetermined, typically harsh consequences or punishments (such as suspension and expulsion) for a wide degree of rule violation” (National Association for School Psychologists, n.d.). Zero-tolerance practices, as well as suspension and expulsion practices, contribute to students becoming disengaged in school, subsequently dropping out of school, and often ending up unemployed or in jail (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

These exclusionary practices, which have led to African American males dropping out of and being pushed out of schools, have had an effect on our society on national, state and local levels. Nationally, African American boys graduate at a rate of 68%, compared with 85% for white boys and 93% for Asian boys (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). In California, the graduation rate for African American males is 68.1%, and in Alameda County, CA, it drops to 66.8%. Students without a high school diploma are at a higher risk of unemployment, poverty, poor health, and dependence on public assistance, and are more likely to engage in criminal behavior (High School Graduates, 2014).

African American boys who do not graduate high school and become unemployable face further consequences from this systemic disenfranchisement. For example, black male high school dropouts are more likely to have interactions with
police, which then means they transition into adulthood with difficulties resulting from their contact with police and the criminal justice system (Binette, 2014). In fact, half of black males are arrested by age 23, which complicates their prospects for employment and participation in their communities (Binette, 2014). In California, nearly 40% of African American males in their twenties are either in jail, or on parole, or on probation (Binette, 2014).

The disenfranchisement of African American boys in the American public education system has led to dismal statistics for these men as they come of age. Examining the programs that are intended to change these statistics are a place to begin the conversation to change the reality for African American boys on the road to manhood. Yet to fully examine the criminalization of African American boys in the American school system, one must recognize and understand the historical context which created this phenomena, which is provided next.

**Historical Context**

The historical legacy of slavery and deep-seated institutional racism has had dramatic impacts on the schooling of African Americans. They were considered less than human by the United States government through the context of slavery and unentitled to the promises that the country offered its citizens. This history has led to the socioeconomic and sociopolitical context within which African American males now live. The end of slavery led to impoverished communities of African Americans, Jim Crow, and eventually mass incarceration that we see today (Alexander, 2011). However, there is a lack of understanding among educators in the United States education system of the socio-historic connection to present-day systemic failure and the stark disconnect between African American boys and the educational system (Kunjufu, 2005).
The African enslavement was the only human enslavement in which humans were considered less than human and where the entire world benefitted financially (Nasheed & Nasheed, 2014). Polly (2013) examined Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS), coined by Leary (2005), noting that PTSS led to the development of an inferior identity for many African Americans, which may have supported and caused some of the outcomes of the zero tolerance policies in schools. The mindsets that fostered slavery have left behind residual effects of racism that allowed the differential treatment of African Americans to remain “an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of society” (Bell, 1992, p. ix). We need only to look at today’s headlines about police misconduct and the blatant disregard for the rights of Black individuals to see how these consequences have led to pervasive injustice that is ingrained in American society. This phenomenon of devaluing lives has consequences in the American psyche. Nationwide, homicide claims the lives of 46 percent of black males between the ages of 5 and 19 (Maran, 1997). The slogan “Black Lives Matter” (Kimberley, 2014) is not only an appeal to address police brutality against the Black community—it is an urgent appeal to address institutionalized racism in the US today.

Coupled with the historical legacy of slavery is the staggering increase in the prison population, one of the highest worldwide, and the rate for African Americans is “particularly catastrophic” (Thompson, 2011, p. 23). As previously cited, “one out of every nine black men aged twenty to thirty-four would be in prison in America” (Thompson, 2011, p. 23). The roots of this issue can be traced to the backlash of the civil rights movements of the 1960s and desegregation. The fear that Whites had of Blacks contributed to an overhaul of the criminal justice system and policies for punishment (Thompson, 2011). Protest and outrage came into urban areas as white voters believed that societal ills and crime were brought to their communities by blacks, and that Blacks were the cause of the lack of law and order (Thompson, 2011). This white fear of urban
unrest led to criminalization of places of color, drug legislation, and law and order policies like Stop and Frisk (Thompson, 2011). In 2010 there were over seven million Americans in the justice system, most from urban neighborhoods with people of color (Thompson, 2011).

Beginning in the late 1960s, security staff was being employed by school districts so that they were able to punitively and aggressively deal with discipline for students. This was connected to zero tolerance policies (Thompson, 2011). Since that time, infractions that had been previously handled within the school discipline structure have now been channeled in the criminal justice system. For example, in 2011, Philadelphia was proud that they had “a huge security force consisting of 657 personnel, including 408 school police officers and 249 school security officers. They also formed an inmate alliance with the justice system to monitor their students (Thompson, 2011). This serves as another example of a policy that criminalizes urban students of color.

Through inequitable discipline practices—such as zero tolerance policies, overrepresentation of African American males in discipline through expulsions and suspensions—overrepresentation of students of color in special education, and an unfair distribution of resources, our schools reproduce racial power structures (Kunjufu, 2005). As an example, in Hayward Unified School District, inequitable discipline presents itself in an overrepresentation of African American males in suspensions and expulsions (data shared with HUSD staff during Leadership Learning Academy meeting August, 2015). This takes place despite the implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support, a proactive approach establishing behavioral supports and social culture, and needed for all students in a school to achieve social, emotional and academic success. Additionally, the district has implemented restorative justice, a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused or revealed by criminal
behavior best accomplished through cooperative processes (Center for Justice and Reconciliation, 2015)

Due to the historical and socioeconomics context within which African American boys live, many Whites see them as lacking culture; believing that their cultural mannerisms, expressions, material belongings and status are inadequate. The cultural deficit model promotes negative beliefs and assumptions regarding the ability, aspirations, and work ethic of systematically marginalized peoples (Tough, 2008). According to this perspective, students of color and poor students often enter school with a lack of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997). Cultural capital refers to the collection of symbolic elements such as skills tastes postures clothing mannerisms material belongings credentials and anything that one acquired being a part of a certain social class (Bourdieu, 1997). Cultural capital is what forms one’s foundation of social life, since the more cultural capital one has, the more powerful his position in society (Bourdieu, 1997).

With a deficit model at work in a school site, teachers and other school staff lower their expectations of behavior and achievement. Gay (2000) suggested that teacher expectations were tied to student achievement and behaviors, thereby causing the labeling and criminalization. This suggests that if teachers are operating under the deficit model perspective, those perceptions will affect their expectations which will eventually lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy in African American boys, further marginalizing them (Gay, 2000).

**Attempts to Interrupt Criminalization**

As noted above, some districts have attempted to reverse or slow the effects and the phenomena of criminalization of African American males in the American schools, using interventions such as Positive Behavior Supports and Restorative Justice. Other
initiatives have directly targeted African American males through “case management” programs. Case management refers to “the activities undertaken by a service provider on behalf of an individual or family that needs multiple services, facilitating their movement through the service delivery process (Michigan State University, Outreach Partnerships, 1999-2000, p.1). As an illustration of this approach, Oakland Unified School District’s African American Male Achievement office, which was created in 2011 to address the specific needs of African American males who needed success in variety of areas in Oakland Unified School District focuses on creating systemic change through improving achievement, attendance, literacy, graduation, middle schools and decreasing suspension and incarceration for these students. So far, graduation rate for African American males has risen from 42% to 57% since 2011, while high school sophomore African American male literacy rates have gone from 28% to 38% (Scott, 2014). One of the most successful initiatives this office has implemented is a program called the Manhood Development Program, which teaches life skills and provides case management to about 650 African American males in multiple schools. After interviewing student Vajra Watson, director of research and policy of equity in the UC Davis chancellor’s office, she stated that through this program, students are gaining a new understating of what it means to be Black. That is, they have gained a reconceptualization of who they are and have internalized that they can be Black and smart. The results of this program have been so encouraging that other cities such as Minneapolis are following suit (Hargrett, 2014).

While results of this program are encouraging so far, few, if any, studies exist that provide enough evidence to determine if a case management approach to the support of African American males interrupt the criminalization process from experiential data. To address this gap in the literature, this current study examined a piloted case management program used by Hayward High school to improve the discipline, attendance, and academic data for African American male students. A case study of this program builds
knowledge around the use of the case management approach and allow for further study if optimal conditions to provide additional insight into which practices are necessary to support African American males and possible other demographics as well.

**Purpose of the Study**

As noted above, our current systems — lack of role models, deficit thinking, teacher perceptions, and discipline policies and practices — have contributed to the criminalization of African American boys in American schools (Stevenson & Stevenson, 2013). In addition, many educators lack an understanding of the families, communities and students they serve (Kunjufu, 2005). The needs of underserved students, particularly African American students, in terms of their sociopolitical and sociolinguistic relativity in the American educational system, are not addressed nor understood by the teachers or systems who service them (Stevenson, 2014).

This current study examined experiences of boys in the College Bound Brotherhood case management program that is being piloted at Hayward High School to investigate how participating in the program has impacted the lived experiences of the African American males on which program focuses. The program, an effort to raise graduation rates and insure college readiness and attendance, not only addresses behavior, but academics as well. Additionally, the College Bound Brotherhood program is meant to assist African American male students in navigating the systemic inequities in the American educational system. In the school year 2013-2014 the rate of graduation for students in the program was 100%, as compared to 71.5% for all African American students in the district (CDE, 2015). The study also examined the experiential data related to these positive changes. The strongest indicators of students who drop out are absenteeism, behavioral problems, suspension, and course failure.
Graduates, 2014), and in the past year, this data has also shown improvement for the students taking part in this program. To gain a deeper understanding of the program and its effect on the stakeholders involved, it is important to study the lived experiences of those involved.

**Case Management**

Because the College Bound Brotherhood program, which was studied, is a case management program, it is important to focus on case management. Although the program in Hayward is similar to the African American Male Office in Oakland’s efforts in the above, it touts that it uses case management (Lewis, 2010). The research around case management found was limited to mental health and criminal justice. However, some literature existed regarding best practices in case management. Case management is defined as “the activities undertaken by a service provider on behalf of an individual or family that needs multiple services, facilitating their movement through the service delivery process” (Michigan State University, 1999-2000, p. 1). Case management includes improvement of services for the recipients and reduces the cost for the system and serves as a process in transition. The first intention of case management is to coordinate services given to the client because services may be specialized and resources may be scarce (Michigan State University, 2000).

The objectives from the clients’ perspective are to be connected to resources, navigation of bureaucracy, and management of one’s own life. From the standpoint of the system, the objective is to manage resources, facilitate service delivery, avoid deterioration of connection to the agency, and monitor progress and outcomes (Michigan State University, 2000). The initial functions should be to identify clients with need
through outreach, assessment gathering information to identify needs of the client and developing a plan of care (Michigan State University, 2000).

The support model is the one most related to the current study, which involves education, empowering advocating and providing support. There are two other models of support. One, the compliance model, involves monitoring the client managing a “best practice” protocols, allocation of dollars, monitoring service deliver, and assuring documentation. The other, the brokering model, involves identifying service, facilitating or linking to service providers, coordinating those providers and intervening in crises (Michigan State University, 2000).

The Michigan State University sites the following as ways to promote effective case management: strength based systems that focus on the positive, that they are individualized, that the client in empowered, and the client is able to make decisions (Michigan State University, 2000). Expectations and benefits should be in balance, ongoing relationships should be built and agencies should articulate expectations and commitments (Michigan State University, 2000).

Chris Black (2012) noted several best practices around case management. Case managers should participate in delivering services, services should be given in the natural environment, there should be a focus on community connections, case managers should have adequate supervision, and caseloads should be small for more frequency and quality contact. There should be no time limit when needs are great. There should be self-determination and access to services in case of crises (Black, 2012). Case management programs should be tailored to the population and clientele that the agency is working with and should have flexibility in order to meet client needs. The largest component is the trusting relationship. This determines the success of the management.
The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of African American boys taking part in the College Bound Brotherhood at Hayward High School?

2. How might these experiences have contributed to the positive outcomes for these students documented in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 year?
The current study will examine the lived experiences of African American boys in a case management program in a comprehensive high school in Hayward that is meant to prepare these students for college readiness, improve attendance, decrease disciplinary action, and increase academic achievement. Although discipline, attendance, and achievement data has shown that this program is changing the outcomes for these boys, it is important that we examine the experiences that are causing this change in depth. The following section will first examine the literature around the problem of criminalization by exploring cultural reasons for this phenomenon, and reviewing factors that support the success of African American boys and interrupt their criminalization. In addition, it will explain the theoretical framework to be used in the analysis of the study, the framework used was a combination or labeling theory and minority threat theory to address both the historic context and the current phenomena of students being labeled in schools.

In order to understand the current situation for African American boys in schools, we must recognize the historical and socio-economic context for these boys and their families. The literature regarding the interruption of criminalization of African American boys in public schools suggests that African American boy are often labeled and criminalized due to a cultural misconnect brought on by cultural deficit thinking. In addition, exclusionary policies and practices cause these students to feel disconnected from the educational process. However, research shows that certain policies and practices, such as engagement, teacher-student connections, engagement of families, male
mentors, African American teachers/adults, interrupt and support the navigation of these boys through this flawed system. Thus, these studies show that the right conditions can enable African American boys a better chance to navigate the institutionalized racism and barriers that push them out of the educational system, interrupting criminalization.

**Culture and Schooling**

**Cultural Mismatch.** African American boys are socialized differently than boys of other cultures based on the historical context and current context in American society (Phinney, 1990). Thus, teachers perceive the behaviors African American males exhibit in the classroom differently than that of their own cultures, leading to “cultural mismatch” between these students, their teachers, and often, their peers of other cultures. “A cultural mismatch is characterized as a situation where a student’s home culture is in contrast with the dominant culture of the classroom.” (Garrett, 2011) When students and teachers have a cultural mismatch, students’ mannerisms and behaviors that in the students’ homes and community can be misconstrued as inappropriate and or problematic. This can lead to students being disciplined simply due to cultural misunderstandings. Fremon and Hamilton (1997) noted that even one of the founders of head start discussed an undercurrent of fear and tension between Black boys and White female and often even Black teachers.

In Kincheloe and Hayes (2007) study he found that Black students were receiving disciplinary consequence for cultural behaviors instead actual behavioral infractions, while their White counterparts only received discipline for actually breaking school rules. These students are labeled and criminalized because of a misunderstanding of their cultural mannerisms, which pushes them out of school:
“In this context, we observe male students of color castigated for their speech patterns, gestures, eye contact or lack of eye contact, dress, and non-verbal interactions... The salient aspect of this issue involves the comparative number of school suspensions and expulsions between male students of color and white males” (Kincheloe, 2007, p.13)

As a contributing factor to the cultural mismatch of teachers and students, Phinney (1990) pointed out that African American culture is a “high intensity” culture and that it encourages expressiveness and active engagement with others. Phinney (1990) found that Black children express feelings of anger more often and try to explain their behaviors to teachers. They are also more likely to take action in social situations. This suggests that school staff members are misinterpreting culturally appropriate behavior as inappropriate in the system of schooling, leading them to disproportionately refer students to the office for discipline. African American males’ need to explain their actions is often misinterpreted as defiance by teachers who lack cultural competency (Phinney, 1990). Teacher biases often account for the excessive referral rates in schools (Phinney, 1990), suggesting that school staff members are misinterpreting these culturally appropriate behaviors as inappropriate, leading them to disproportionately refer student of color. White teachers only need to feel threatened by a Black boy for him to be suspended or expelled and they often have a heightened sense of threat when African American boys do not follow instructions (Kunjufu, 2002). This could be caused by the way he looks at the teacher, his body language, or his clothes (Kunjufu, 2002).

The United States teaching staff is 83% female and 92 % White, and only 1.2 % of our teaching population is African American male (Kunjufu, 2005). African American boys see themselves (African American and male) the least in the teachers that they interact with on a daily basis, and thus receive the most improper and inappropriate
labeling from our school system (Kunjufu, 2005). In other words, there is a cultural mismatch between the staff and the students they teach. The needs of African American students, in terms of their sociopolitical and sociolinguistic relativity in the American educational system are not addressed or even understood by the teachers who service them (Kunjufu, 2005).

**Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.** When students are more connected and engaged in the classrooms and with the teachers that serve them, they are less likely to be excluded through discipline. Therefore, it is important for teachers to teach their students with their cultures and backgrounds in mind. According to Gay (2000), culturally responsive teaching is teaching that “filters curriculum content and teaching strategies through their cultural frames of reference to make the content more personally meaningful and easier to master” (p. 24). In these settings, students are responsible for each other—as illustrated by Lewis (2009), who found that in culturally responsive classrooms, the teacher showed a connectedness with all students, encouraged a community of learners, and encouraged students to learn collaboratively. By contrast, in assimilationist classroom the teacher student relationship is hierarchical and fixed; the teacher has connectedness with individuals, encourages competitiveness, and isolated learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

To determine the effectiveness of Culturally Relevant pedagogy, Bullard (2014) performed a phenomenological case study on a school that was using African-centered teaching and methods. She examined the themes of expectation, validation, school culture and curriculum. Across the different teachers studied, she found that they believed that the students could achieve academically and socially. The teachers had connected to the school because they could identify with the school and believed that the students at the school would succeed because there was a strong sense of self-identity (Bullard, 2014). The teachers believed that students’ success was connected to the African centered
teaching, the student had formed self-identities, there were positive discipline policies and frequent celebrations, there were strong relationships between teachers and student, students had also begun to take pride in themselves (Bullard, 2014). Because of this frame, the school had built a culture of success for the African American students.

As Bullard (2014) found, institutions have the power to shape, create, and regulate social identities. For example, disciplinary practices, such as repetitive referral of students to the office, may contribute to labeling. African American students become disengaged in school, and are often referred to the office for offenses such as “defiance” which often cannot even be defined by teachers, and labeled as “bad boys” (Ferguson, 2010). These institutional practices contribute to a hidden curriculum that teaches them they are marginalized by isolating them through discipline and labeling them as criminally inclined. African American boys internalize this label of “bad kids,” thus causing a cycle of exclusionary practices, used in the absence of appropriate interventions, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy (Gay, 2000), and leading to a criminal identity and “bad boy” identity (Ferguson, 2010). When Ferguson (2010) studied Rosa Parks Elementary in Berkeley, CA, she realized that in the boys’ accounts of their future dreams, they only saw themselves in professions that would not involve schooling. This happened because they had internalized that they were not able to be successful in school. She noted that in Oakland, CA, African American boys were being suspended disproportionally, in Michigan (where there is still corporal punishment) they were hit more than others, and in Cincinnati they were twice as likely to be sent to an in-school suspension room. In Cincinnati these rooms are called the dungeon and at Rosa Parks it was called the jailhouse.

Riley (2013) examined teachers’ critical reflection on their practice and self-awareness when implementing culturally relevant pedagogy. She found that although teachers scored high on cultural awareness, cultural awareness and cultural knowledge
surveys, their students had no idea that they had this understanding. Because of this lack of relational sharing about their cultural knowledge, there was no change in test scores for students. The researcher concluded that teachers need to reflect their understandings to the students that they serve, and also need to understand their own cultural pedagogy, their own cultural beliefs and their own cultural identity to make culturally relevant pedagogy effective. In addition, Riley (2013) found there was a need for teachers to pursue opportunities for professional development around cultural competency. Finally, teachers needed to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy into their own pedagogy, but should not lose their own teaching identity while doing so.

Exclusionary Practices

Zero tolerance and disciplinary practices. When studying exclusionary practices and the issue of criminalization, examining disciplinary policies and practices may be a powerful indicator of the disenfranchisement, as noted by Ferguson (2010):

“Punishment is a fruitful site for a close-up look at routine institutional practices, individual acts, and cultural sanctions that give life and power to racism in a school setting that not only produce massive despair and failure among Black students, but that increasingly demonizes them” (p.19-20).

Zero Tolerance policies are policies that “manipulate the application of predetermined consequences, most often severe and punitive in nature, that are intended to be applies regardless of the gravity of behavior, mitigating circumstances, or situation context, (Rim-Kaughman, 2008).

Zero tolerance policies have caused and exacerbated the criminalization of African American boys labeled as problems, at risk, or emotionally disturbed (Ferguson,
2010). The discipline systems that currently exist in our schools are tightly related to policies such as Zero Tolerance, a policy that does not seek to restore students, but instead excludes them from schools. The U.S. Department of Education released data showing that African American children are only 17% of student enrolled in public schools but make up 32% of the out of school suspensions. In contrast, their white counterparts make up 63% of enrollment and make up only 50% of suspensions (Webb & Kritsonis, 2006).

Some zero tolerance policies have mandated suspensions for a variety of offenses, including attendance issues. Administrators began to criminalize truancy at the end of the twentieth century, while the criminalization of other behaviors kept student out of school through record breaking expulsion rates (Thompson, 2011). Zero tolerance has led to suspensions that do not discriminate between mild or severe infractions. These policies impede principal discretion in regards to issuing appropriate discipline based on the degree of the infraction (Kajs, 2006). Research shows that, as these policies are implemented currently, they are ineffective and lead to increased rates of students and discriminatory actions in disciplinary practices (National Association of School Psychologists, n.d.).

Another exclusionary practice, suspensions, only lead to more suspensions and often to an increased drop-out rate, as noted by Losen and Skiba (2010), “…Suspension and expulsion often provide troubled kids exactly what they do not need: an extended, unsupervised hiatus from school that increases their risk of engaging in substance abuse and violent crime (p.11).” Suspensions are also at the administrator’s discretion (Dillon 2010), and therefore reflect how students are labeled and criminalized in school. Furthermore, Gregory, Skiba, and Noguera (2010) noted that suspended students often become less bonded to school and therefore are less invested in school rules and course work which is the reason they are more likely to be suspended again. They then lose their motivation to be successful in school, becoming more likely to break rules and laws as
well. Gregory (2010) suggests that these school sanctions perpetuate the disengagement that is often the reason for the misbehaviors that result in student suspensions and expulsions.

In a particular study of 400 incarcerated high school freshmen in Baltimore, Dillon (2010) found that two-thirds had been suspended at least once in middle school. Because federal law requires schools to expel students for weapons possession or serious safety issues, the authors said they focused on suspensions, which often result from fighting, abusive language, and classroom disruptions. When we notice that this many of the incarcerated youth have been expelled at least once in middle school, it is an example of how these exclusionary practices lead our students directly into lives of crime and ultimately incarceration.

**Over-representation in special education.** One way that African American boys are pushed of the educational system is through referrals to special educations: often designated emotionally disturbed. As Kunjufu (2005) noted, much of our assessment for Special Education is based on culturally biased IQ testing, which has resulted in a disproportionate number of African American students being placed in separate special education classes. In addition, due to cultural mismatch in behaviors, white teachers often mis-identify African American students as emotionally disturbed. This disproportionate placement in a separate special education environment amounts to another method of exclusion. To combat this disproportionality, the 2004 legislation (HR 1350) connected with No Child Left Behind placed greater responsibility for districts to disaggregate data to insure that there is not disproportionality in referrals to Special Education.

African American children represent only 17% of the school population in American schools, but are 30% of children in special education. Furthermore, African American males represent 80% of African American students placed (Kunjufu, 2005). “If the White female is the ideal student, then many African American males—those who
cannot be quiet or sit still for long periods of time, have short attention spans, cannot work independently of neatly on ditto sheets, are not organized, do not speak standard English, and prefer right-brain lesson plans—are in serious trouble” (Kunjufu, 2005, p. 29). This disparity is a reflection of the cultural mismatch between teachers and students that will be addressed in a section to follow.

In a study of school psychologists, Makepeace (2011) used an online survey methodology to find information around demographics, knowledge, and ecological systems as understood by psychologists who she describes as the gatekeepers of special education. Makepeace (2011) found that most psychologists had knowledge about black boys was in relation to Emotional Disturbance classification, graduation rates, and prison enrollment. Makepeace believed that this was related to the media representation of Black boys that these professionals are exposed to. She also found that psychologists used a microsystem explanation for the reason for Black boys being overrepresented in special education. They believed that reason for overrepresentation was lack of nurturing, encouraging and positive interactions with teacher and that the additional reason was that teachers have limited resources to address the needs of Black boys (Makepeace, 2011). When those who are responsible for classifying children for special educational service are influenced by media and the perceived needs of teachers instead of the needs of these boys, it becomes apparent why they are overrepresented in this exclusionary practice. This has been called a new form of segregation as black students were integrated in the sixties, a new way of removing them from public schools needed to be created for those who did not want them with their white counterparts (Alexander, 2011) (Fremon & Hamilton 1997).
The Need for Engagement

In order to reduce disciplinary sanctions and dropout rates in African American boys, we need to engage them in academics as well as the school culture and community. Disciplinary sanctions perpetuate the disengagement that is often the reason for the misbehaviors that land students in the suspensions and expulsions. That is, as these boys endure criminalization, they become disengaged in the school community, resulting in more behaviors that cause further disciplinary actions. Lewis’s (2009) study revealed that the culture of children and their teachers affects student engagement and learning. Next, I address the importance of teacher-student connections, family involvement, and mentoring in the positive engagement of African American students in school.

Teacher-student connections. As noted earlier in this section, in culturally relevant classrooms, the teacher shows a connectedness with all students, builds a community of learners, and encourages students to learn collaboratively (Lewis, 2009). In these settings students are responsible for each other. The teacher cannot be the only expert in the class denying students a voice and acknowledge their own expertise disempowers them (Delpit, 2006). She also mentions that there should be consultancy with adults who said the culture of the children to assist with the building of relationships with students (Delpit, 2006). The student/teacher relationship really matters and students need to feel a meaningful connection with their teacher. Teachers will best develop critical thinking skills in their students when they admit the limits of their own knowledge (Brooks, 2011). Teacher-student connections create a transformative space in which students are affirmed, gain insight into their potential, and grow toward fulfilling personal and professional capacities (Gillespie, 2005).

Engagement of family and community. Teachers have a better chance of making connections to students if they also connect with the students’ families, who are
the child’s first teachers, and therefore a major influence on the child. In their study of how schools are failing black boys, they told the counter-stories of educators, students, and parents affected by systematic failure. Fremon and Hamilton (1997) found that parents and teachers need to be partners to break down cultural barriers and stop the idea that that teaches hold that student behaviors are caused by malice and ignorance. Parent participation is critical to change in schools but is not always practical (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997). Many of the parents felt single parents often with two jobs and spoke with felt unheard by schools and intimidated. Due to the cultural norm of not “being in someone else’s business” speaking out in large meetings is often not a possibility; therefore, Fremon and Hamilton (1997) suggest that parents create smaller informal subgroups so that the voices can be heard. In addition, these researchers suggested that there needs to be more outreach to urban families and communities, because many school personnel have low expectations of urban families. Fremon and Hamilton (1997) also suggest that teachers receive consistent training in cultural, class, gender, and language issues. There was also a need for male mentors, extracurricular activities, and school reform. Reform needed to include stopping inappropriate use of tracking in classrooms, setting up task forces to make curriculum more relevant, and resource specialists reexamining the guideline for referring students to special educations classes and programs (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997).

Rema Reynolds (2009) examined the interactions of African American middle class parents and their relationships with public secondary schools. She examines the mandated parent involvement structures such as Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and School Site Council (SSC). She discussed that there are some mandates around No Child Left Behind Policy (Reynolds, 2009). She used case study for a deeper understanding of how these parents experienced involvement. She discussed “double consciousness” as coined by W.E.B DuBois, siting that there was an idea of having to see themselves
through the eyes of others. She also mentions that through her case study she found the counter stories, the stories that are told by the parents that tell the stories of those in the minority that are as relevant to the stories of parent involvement (Reynolds, 2009). She uses the Critical Race Theory to frame this work (Reynolds, 2009). In the case studies she notes that voices are unheard and or misunderstood through PTA and miscommunications between parents and staff (Reynolds, 2009). She concluded that we need to encourage parents to be informed, show up, sign up (for governing bodies), question, critique, confront, challenge, and create advocacy groups. She notes that the voices of these parents, in both the collective and individual sense, are missing from the conversations in schools (Reynolds, 2009).

**Male mentors for black boys.** Another factor in the context of criminalization that affects African American boys is the lack of African American males in the home due to the systemic failures in American society leading to disproportionate rates of incarceration and homicide for this population. As noted previously, in California, nearly 40 percent of African American males in their twenties are either in jail, have been in jail, on parole, or on probation (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997). Because so many adult African American males are killed, jailed or have shortened life-spans, school-age African American boys are often left without male role models (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997). Fremon and Hamilton (1997) found that there is a need for male mentors for African American boys because the earlier these boys see African American males in schools the more they will value education. In addition, there is a need for relationship and trust building. These boys need committed male mentors, as Lewis (2010) explains, “Mentoring is not a feel good, one-time thing…You have to open up to them, sharing with them and having that reciprocated. It’s tougher than raising your own children. You’re limited in what you can do. You can’t pick and choose when you mentor. You have to mentor in your tough times, too.” (Lewis, 2010, p.1)
Having male mentors at school makes students more likely to complete school (Lewis, 2010). Lewis (2010) argued for the importance of finding ways to connect African American boys’ natural mentors to their school lives, stating that having mentors will keep them in school and improve college graduation rates, such as those in historically Black colleges and universities. Providing the necessary mentors could reduce the likelihood of African male students dropping out or being pushed out (Lewis, 2010). When students are not dropping out or pushed out of school it interrupts their criminalization.

As another rationale for male mentors for African American boys, Fremon and Hamilton (1997) found that the earlier these boys saw African American males in schools, the more they valued education. Additionally, Kunjufu (2002) suggested that African American teachers should take a lesson from Black Colleges because these schools produce 75% graduates due to the mentors and role models that these schools provide. These schools produce 30% of African American graduates in the U.S., but only 13% of African American college students attend these school.

Kunjufu (2002) further provided data that explains the importance of students having African American teachers: “We know quantitatively that if African American students have Black teachers for one year, they improve 4 percentage points in reading and math” (2002, p.41). Speculating on the results of multiple years of African American teachers, he argued that African American educators have a valuable significance to the children in their community and that money should be put into training and placing African American educators in schools where there are many African American students. In a sense teaching is also mentorship.

Grimes (2014) worked with the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey to perform case studies and give some suggestions around Black males as mentors for Black boys. He noted the great need of mentors by siting similar issues
discussed in this literature review: academic needs, a change in zero tolerance discipline, and low graduation rates. They noted that when young people are mentored properly: 98% stay in school, 98% do not become teen parents, 85% do not use drugs, and 98% avoid participation in gang activity (Grimes, 2014). He found that some factors hinder mentorship effectiveness: cultural differences, collectivism, and cultural mistrust. He also found that most mentorship happens through religious affiliations.

Because the right mentor fit was important, Grimes (2014) used a tool to assess the mentor readiness, the “Is This Work for You?” Readiness to Engage Report Card. He found that mentors needed to have Community Concern and social responsibility. He also found that when recruiting mentors, they needed outreach that was community focused, highly spiritual, and influenced by word of mouth. Another finding was that because African American males have been socialized to “keep family business at home” it is more difficult to get them involved in formalized mentorship. Some tofu the motivation factors for mentors are: values, social reason, understanding, being protective and for their career (Grimes, 2014). The conclusions of this study were that as mentoring programs are created they need a culturally relevant foundation in order to recruit and retain black men that will properly mentor the boys (Grimes, 2014). This will help the program to create trusting relationships that will assist boys facing the navigation of the systems they must face on their way to academic success (Grimes, 2014).

Andre Perry (2015) gives a reminder that mentorship should not be used to “fix” Black boys. They do not need fixing. It is the system that is problematic. He notes that in education we often blame the children for their disengagement. When mentors believe that the children are the problem, they lose their effectiveness. He states that, “mentoring programs are popular panaceas for school engagement (Perry, 2015, p.3).” He suggests that more important is teacher diversity and teachers’ preparation as stated before. He believes that the mentors need to be mentored and that gatekeepers (tests and people who
may hinder scholars of color into particular fields) become more willing to accept Black and Brown males (Perry, 2015). He suggests that mentors could actually provide the community/family engagement mentioned earlier (Perry, 2015).

Conclusions

In order to thoroughly understand the criminalization of African American boys in the American school system one must understand the historical and socioeconomic context from which they emerge on a daily basis. We must then understand how the cultural mismatches and the deficit theory combine to push them out of schools through multiple exclusionary practices. In addition to this background knowledge around the issue, the literature states the importance of relationship and trust. Connections between schools and families and between teachers and students and between mentors and students are all beneficial to the navigation of the systematic racism that these boys face.

The case management program provides African American male students with African American male mentors. It also includes Saturday workshops for families to an unheard population of parents. The program therefore addresses several of the needs that the research has shown support African American boys, including the need for male mentors (Wright, 2009) and African American men. Another lesson from the research that is reflected in the program being examined is the need a deeper connection with families and the community (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997). The current study, then, will attempt to examine how these research-based program features affect the lived experiences of student involved in the implementation.
Theoretical Framework

As we examine the criminalization of African American boys in the American educational system, we must note some of the theories and hypotheses surrounding the context of minority students in school discipline. While a myriad of theories exist that address the socialization of African Americans to mainstream Americans, for the current study I used a combination of Labeling Theory and Minority Threat Theory. By using both theories, I will be to address the cultural mismatch that labels students as “bad boys” who are perceived as threats by the dominant culture, and thus will honor both the current structures as well as the residual effects of the historic context that has led to criminalization of African American boys.

Labeling Theory

According to Labeling Theory, people are socially controlled based on their social status and their involvement in behaviors that are different from those of the dominant culture. When students are labeled as “bad boys,” it may be due to the social construct that is rooted in perceptions that dominant society and culture has of students of color (Brick, 2009). Labeling students, particularly African American boys, as defiant and “bad” leads to the problem of criminalization because the boys begin to internalize these labels placed on them by the adults that they interact with in schools and enact associated behaviors (Ferguson, 2010). Labeling theorists emphasize how important social attributes, capital, and resources are to the labeling process. There is also a negative effect of labeling on the self-image of those labeled and the lowering of self-image can lead to additional deviant behaviors (Brick, 2009).
Minority Threat

Minority threat theory states that the majority group has arrived at their prejudice based on a perceived threat to the by the minority group (Brick, 2009). This can explain more formal social control such as school disciplinary actions, arrests, and eventual incarceration. Social control relates to the ability of the majority to sanction minorities to maintain control of their behaviors. According to Stacey (2010), minority threat was not originally applied to social control but was, in fact, related (designed) to look at discrimination and prejudice. One of the first to describe minority threat, Blalock (1967, as cited by Stacey, 2010), argued that as the population of the minority group increased, the amount of discrimination would increase as well. Stacey (2010) discussed that the fear of crime from the minority population which motivates the control that the majority population takes. This theory gives a meaningful context for the criminalization of African American boys in schools: the criminalization of African American males in school, then, may be the result of their perceived threat to larger society, which in turn causes school employees to enact controlling and exclusionary measures against them.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

There are a multitude of African American boys who are over-represented in referrals to the office, referrals to special education, and in suspension rates (Kunjufu, 2005). These boys disengage and drop out of school because these students are being systematically pushed out of schools. This study will examine the experienced of African American boys enrolled in the case management program (College Bound Brotherhood) at Hayward High School that provides wrap around services to African American male students to interrupt those patterns. The current study will begin with focus groups of students enrolled in the College Bound Brotherhood. One student will then be identified for a more in depth study. He, his parent, his teacher, and his case manager was interviewed to provide a clearer picture of the ways this program affects the students and those he interacts with daily.

Research Question

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of African American boys taking part in the College Bound Brotherhood at Hayward High School?

2. How might these experiences have contributed to the positive outcomes for these students documented in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school year?
A case study design was used for this study. Case study refers to a “…strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence” (Arthur, 2012, p. 102). Using a case study approach gives the researcher the ability to answer “why” and “how” questions so they can thoroughly explain a phenomenon or describe why a particular program did or did not work. This was the best design for the current study because the data has shown that the College Bound Brotherhood has increased attendance and academic scores, and a case study approach will help to determine why and how this growth has occurred.

The methods will include collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. An examination of quantitative data was used as a backdrop to the qualitative data. An examination of pre- and post- quantitative data will include attendance, discipline and academic data. A case study methodology will provide an in-depth view of the case management program at Hayward High School in the coming year. Interviews and focus groups was coupled with document and data examination. Using this methodology, I was able to study multiple aspects and perspectives of the College Bound Brotherhood program. Including multiple voices in the research is important because as any story is being told there are always a multitude of perspectives from which to draw knowledge. Somewhere within those perspectives lies the truth of the matter. I feel that there is a distinct importance in multiple perspectives.
Sample Population and Selection Criteria

All students opting into the case management program will have their data reviewed. This data was a backdrop to the lived experience of the students’ experiences. The researcher incorporated 9 of the students enrolled in the program of students to participate in the focus groups. From the focus groups, the researcher selected one student who was suggested by the area director for the Hayward feeder pattern. The student was chosen because he had reportedly shown growth while in the College Bound Brotherhood program. Once this student was selected, there was a more in-depth interviews with him, his parent, his case manager and one teacher who he stated that he trusted. This was done so as to gain a more holistic understanding of the student’s experience and the program’s impact on him. Moreover, this provided a deeper understanding of the relationships formed through the program that may have affected the student.

Setting

Hayward Unified School District (HUSD) is situated in Alameda County, California where 68.3% of families are white-collar employees and 31.7 are blue-collar. 12.8 percent of families have no high school education, and 58.5% of the households are unmarried. Most households have an average income of 45-64,000 dollars yearly (“San Francisco Association of Realtors, n.d.). HUSD contains 21 elementary schools, five middle schools, three high schools, an Alternative High School, Adult Education Center and Helen Turner Children’s Center for pre-school children. There are over 20,000 students in grades K-12 with a wealth of diverse cultures, heritages, languages, and economic conditions. Hayward Unified School District offers educational opportunities through an alternative high school, independent study and Home Schooling
programs support students who need non-traditional settings (Hayward Unified School District, 2015).

The Hayward Unified School district has made the following quote on its website as a way of proposing to support its students. “We provide our students with a safe learning environment, opportunity and support to attain high academic achievement and skills for our students to graduate and become contributing members of our democratic society” (Hayward Unified School District, 2015). Hispanic or Latino students represent 60%, American Indians represent 0%, Asians represent 8%, Pacific Islanders make up 4%, Pilipino students represent 4%, African Americans represent 13%, and White students represent 6% of the student population of Hayward Unified School District.

According to the mission statement, HUSD seeks to empower all students and promote academic excellence. They further tout the desire to develop students physically, intellectually and emotionally. African American students represent 13% of the students in Hayward and are the second largest population. The current study will examine the experiences of students who are involved in an initiative to support the mission and vision of the Hayward Unified School district as it attempts to address the needs of “all” students, African American students being a large percentage of the “all.”

Hayward recognized the need to support its African American student population and has adopted a board policy, the African American Student Achievement Initiative, designed to meet that need (Hayward Unified School District, 2015). African American boys are currently overrepresented in referrals to the office and suspensions (personal communication, Katherine Hannah, November 6, 2015) and in previous years were also overrepresented in referrals to Special Education as well (M. Wayne personal conversation, December 14, 2014). African Americans have also consistently scored lower on standardized tests than any other demographics (Hayward Unified School District, 2015). However, the most current assessment data (CDE, 2015) shows that
African American students are the second lowest scoring demographic group in Hayward Unified School District.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Latino/Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Two or More Races</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Met</td>
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<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Nearly Met</td>
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<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Not Met</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: CAASPP Data 2015 (http://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/)

Figure 1: HUSD graduation rate by ethnicity

College Bound Brotherhood

College Bound Brotherhood was a program that provided case managers, parent support, and mentorship for African American male students at Hayward High School.
In its first implementation year, the College Bound Brotherhood program provided orientation at school and assigned mentors to each student. They also provided workshops focusing on introducing and completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, scholarships and college applications. They further provided incentives for students who completed FAFSA and showed proof of submission. College Bound Brotherhood partnered with Chabot College’s Striving Black Brothers (SBB) and presented a Chabot Black Education Summit. Black males from each high school were invited to listen to motivational speaker, campus tours and men of SBB and registered for applicable entry exams. All students’ of the eligible College Bound Brotherhood GPA’s were uploaded and tracked. HUSD contracted with Concerned Parent Association to work with all black student to increase overall FAFSA completion rates.

College Bound Brotherhood worked with the district to ensure that grade point averages were uploaded to the California Student Aid Commission. Students and families were able to call for support and questions around the financial aid process. Veronica Ewing, who is now working as the Career and College Coordinator for Hayward Unified School District, worked as a program manager through the adult school to provide case managers. The College Bound Brotherhood met once a month with parents and students with Dr. Darlene Willis and her team. When the program began there were only 56 students and they were targeting 100 students. Every African American male student in implementation grade levels at Hayward High School was invited.

Dr. Lisa Davies (Area Director for the Hayward High School Feeder Pattern) shared that the grant from the Marcus Foster Foundation was for $20,000 over 2 years for case management implementation and parent support. Each case manager has 33 to 34 students on their case load. The mentors monitor students in the areas of socio emotional, attendance, and academics. Parents are also given ideas on how to implement strategies at home. It is a wraparound program with multiple levels of support. There
were difficulties with the implementation. One issue was when to meet with students, there was a need to keep students in their core classes so that they would not miss instructional minutes. Another issue was how to connect case managers to students so that they would be able to build trust to make case management effective. Only one of the managers was on site full time and he worked with half of the students in the program. In the first year the managers are working with 9th to 12th grades. Another issues are that implementation started in January, so many bad habits have already set in and are hard to break at this point with students. There are many partnerships supporting the boys. College Bound Brotherhood also provided parent workshops with Darlene Willis, a former professor at Cal State Hayward who supports the Concerned Parent Alliance. There were also opportunities that the students have such as College tours, visits to black owned companies, and even a visit the home of a grandparent of an NBA star whose home was being renovated by a black owned construction company. A future concern is the idea of financial sustainability. The goals of the program are aligned with Local Control Accountability Plan with its focus on A-G requirements, opportunities for higher learning, parent support, and attendance.

The principal of Hayward High School, Dave Seymore, shared his perspective on the program. He noted that College bound Hayward began last year with Dr. Willis, and that it is funded by Marcus Foster foundation grant. He recalls that there was an interview that asked how the school would use the grant money. He mentioned that the program could service a maximum of 150 students, including recent graduates with a goal of 25 students per grade level. He stated that there were 67 people at the first meeting, and that the school was hoping to service 100 students this year.

Three mentors were hired for up to 30 hours a week to work with students to meet one on one and look at data with the seniors. The school sends email reminders are sent to students as a form of outreach. Once a month there are parent meetings the Dr. Darlene
Willis and the Concerned Parent Alliance team. Students meet with class presidents and teachers who are brought in to support students. College Bound Brotherhood has implemented dress to impress Thursdays, when students where ties and jackets. There are some students who have started to dress this way daily.

When I attended the College Bound Brotherhood planning meeting, I learned that the College Bound Brotherhood began in 2008 as a pipeline of African American males into technological careers. It is considered to be a collective effort to support a “lost and forgotten” population. College Bound Brotherhood currently exists in San Francisco, West Contra Costa, Oakland, and Hayward where each district has District Implementation Team (DIT). Concerned Parent Alliance connects the school to the families. The teams provide structure moving the needle with a strategic plan to improve schools through systems work. Attendees of the meeting mentioned it is important to understand problem see the systems establish aim develop theory make changes. A common set of measures were used by all districts to determine success of the program.

College success plans provided vision and are regularly checked. They used cycle of inquiry to continuously monitor improvement plans to become a part of school systems. In December, change ideas were proposed. In January, they narrowed focus of change ideas and created draft of the Cycle of Inquiry plans. In February, teams reviewed and revised plan draft and began to collect data. Attendees from the Hayward District Implementation team noted that getting students to complete their FAFSAs worked best when they had case managers worked with these students, called from school phones so that parents would answer, went into classrooms to discuss the process, spoke to parents, built relationships and used a FAFSA checklist.

The implementation of the College Bound Brotherhood was a reflection of a need that the district identified to promote the educational success of African American students, as noted on Hayward Unified School District’s webpage (Hayward Unified
School District, 2015): “In Hayward, as in many districts across the state and the nation, our African-American students are not achieving at the level we need. We are committed to every student’s academic success in Hayward Unified. Our AASAI is focused initiative to bring resources and strategies to address the needs of our African-American students” (Hayward Unified School District, 2015).

In the 2013-14 school year, 32.75% of suspensions in Hayward Unified were African American students, while African American students only represent 13% of the population of students overall. This is slightly down from 35% in the 2012-13 school year, and may be credited to the implementation of Restorative Justice and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports in the 2013-14 school year. In the 2014-15 school year in middle and high schools in Hayward African American students represented 33.3%, the second highest percentage of expulsions although they are only 12% of the population. The highest percentage was held by Latino/Hispanic students, who represent 38.1% on expulsions and are 61.5% of the population. The data is clear that African American students are still overrepresented in discipline in Hayward despite efforts to change this data.

As Hayward High School examined data around African American students who would be enrolled in the College Bound Brotherhood case management program, they found that for 81 African American male seniors who agreed to become College Bound Brotherhood members: 55% of the students had a GPA of 2.0 and below, 11% had GPA of 3.1 to 3.9, and only 1% of the students has a GPA of 4.0 or higher. They found that five had been incarcerated or expelled from school, 7-10 left the district and didn’t complete the program (Grant request document for College Bound Brotherhood).

These students were an example of what was happening across the district. Exclusionary discipline practices and low academic performance was evident in the initial data. The first year of implementation of this program was the 2014-15 school year,
beginning in January of 2015. The current study examined the experiences that have led to the quantitative data that implies that this program is successful.

**Data Sources and Procedures**

**Quantitative data.** Student attendance data, academic benchmark data, and discipline data was collected on Infinite Campus and reviewed in order to show the effects of the implementation of the case management system. Quantitative data was collected using Infinite Campus. Hayward Unified School District uses this interface to store data around attendance and discipline. Academic data was pulled from the OARS data system used by Hayward Unified School District as the academic data interface and Infinite Campus which is used for attendance and discipline data. This data answered questions around the way that the implementation affects the students’ attendance, discipline and academics.

**Qualitative data.** Collection of qualitative data included semi-structured interviews and focus groups of students. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer and respondents engage in a formal interview, the interviewer develops and uses an ‘interview guide,’ which is a list of questions/topics to be discussed during the conversation, possibly in a particular order. Although the interviewer follows a guide, they may also follow additional topics that come up in the conversation that may stray from the guide but are thought to be appropriate (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Focus groups are organized discussions with a group of individuals that are selected to share their views about a topic (Arthur, 2012). I will use “overlapping methods” to achieve dependability and credibility using: focus groups and interviews.
**Focus Groups.** In order to determine what experiences contributed to positive outcomes of the program, there were two focus groups of four or five boys. The focus group sessions lasted a half an hour to forty-five minutes each. The boys were asked semi-structured questions as guidelines to promote conversation among the boys. I met with students to discuss the changes they see since the case management program was introduced in the school. I will also be working to find out how they see themselves in the school context. I included the Area Director for the Hayward High School feeder pattern for the Hayward Unified School District and the case managers so that the boys would have familiar faces in the room so and would feel comfortable sharing. In addition, the information would be valuable to those running the program on site immediately. These additional participants asked few questions and added minimally to the conversation. The rationale for using focus groups is that it is a way to gather multiple perspective on the implementation and this method allows for the why and how questions that are included in my research questions (Arthur, 2012). Focus group work can lead to changes in educational policy because new ideas may emerge from the voices of the students in the focus groups (Arthur, 2012). Sample questions for focus groups include:

Tell me about your experience with College Bound Brotherhood? Tell me about your interactions with each other? With other students? With staff?

**Interviews with students, teachers and parents and case managers.** Semi-structured interviews were used so that the questions were simply a guideline for the conversation, but kept the conversation fluid and unstructured. This allowed for the interviewee to help guide the conversation. The interviews took under one hour each. There were a total of 4 interviews: the student selected from the focus groups, his mother, his case manager, and his teacher. We began interviews after the completion of the first focus group session. I interviewed these individuals because “Every word is a microcosm of their consciousness” (Seidman, 2006, p. 7). I wanted to hear the stories of the people
who work with our African American males. I also want to get to know how the students and case manager, parents, and teachers are experiencing the implementation, as “at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience.” (Seidman, 2006, p.9) Sample Interview Questions for Students include: How has it changed your experience at Hayward High School? Tell me about your case manager. How has the program affected your family/parents? Tell me about the benefits of the program? Drawbacks? Please tell me about the adults you trust most at Hayward High School. Tell me about time that you spend? Sample interview questions for adults include: How has it changed your experience at Hayward High School? How has the program affected your family/parents? Tell me about the benefits of the program? Drawbacks?

Field Notes. In addition to the focus groups and interviews, I also experienced some meeting and events in order to see first-hand some of the experiences that they boys had being in the College-Bound Brotherhood. I attended and took notes at College-Bound events and Hayward Unified meetings, taking notes to capture some of the experiences and perceptions of the program. I attended the Local Control Accountability Plan Town Hall Meeting, the Second Anniversary Celebration of the College Bound program, one of the Saturday College Bound Brotherhood meetings, and one of the College Tours.

Methods of Analysis

Qualitative Data was coded once it has been collected. Codes are labels that researchers apply to sections of data, and can be applied to field notes, focus groups and interview transcripts (DeMarrais, 2004). Coding was used to categorize data and denote themes (DeMarrais, 2004). The field notes were recorded in a journal and then transcribed. In this study it was used for focus groups and interview transcripts from one
student, his parent, his teacher, and his case manager. Next, word groups were highlighted to begin initial coding. After that, I created groups and places quotes and phrases into an open coding graphic organizer. From those groupings, I began memo writing about each of the topics in the graphic organizer. What came out of that memo writing follows in Chapter 4. Finally, I assigned names to the interviewees for anonymity. The student interviewed has been assigned the name “Jimmy” for the student, “Ms. Smith” for the parent, and “Mr. Robinson” for the teacher.

Because the implementation of the program is multifaceted, I examined a slice of multiple aspects and examine the relationships that are formed and possibly strengthened or strained by the implementation. The data was analyzed to determine where these stories coincide and where they diverge.

Limitations

While ensuring that all participants understand the purpose of the research and making the process explicit, I was prepared for it to be difficult to build trust with all participants, as Shenton (2003) notes: “In order to address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work…” (p.71). It was not difficult to build trust as Dr. Willis shared the importance of the study with families and students. However, I studied a small community and although my findings may be trustworthy, small sampling may not be applicable with all communities.

Another limitation and asset was I saw the data and the analysis with the lens of a single parent who is currently raising an African American male student who is being educated in Hayward Unified School District. This made me more passionate about the
research and investment in the implications to be found. Now that the study is done, I see that I was also looking for what was working for African American boys, like my own son. Although I am an administrator and can work to help him navigate some systemic challenges, I too, need him to have some of the experiences that College Bound Brotherhood offers. Over the course of the research I began to see the program as one that I would like to support professionally in the future as an administrator and community member if it continues. As I saw this information with the lens of administrator who has chosen to work in an urban setting because she was unable to attend the subpar schools that existed in her neighborhood (mainly African American) and remembering how unsupported these students were. This study is important to me because I have a particular stock in Hayward providing appropriate conditions for African American boys because I have a son will be in a Hayward Unified School District high school setting and because I service elementary students who feed into the secondary schools where this program is being implemented.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

As I sat down to speak with my focus group—a group of 15-17-year-old African American boys—I thought to myself, “Why would they want to share their ideas and experiences with me in a candid way?” I decided that they needed to know why I was so interested in them and in this program. So I shared my motivation. I told them, “I’ve got skin in the game.” I explained to these young men that I have an African American son who would be in their shoes soon, and I want high school to be a productive and preparatory time for his future self. Not only was I the principal of a school in their district, but I was also a single mother hoping to improve the experiences for young African American boys, including my son. One of College Bound Brotherhood students in the focus group said that he remembered meeting my eleven-year-old at the College Bound Brotherhood meeting where I was first introduced to them. He said, “Your son will fit right in with the Brotherhood” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016). During this focus group, College Bound Brotherhood students shared what they would tell the other boys that would follow them, including my son:

“Stay committed. Stay committed to the program. Just keep coming, even if you feel like it’s unnecessary or like there’s nothing for you here. There’s always something for somebody here. College-Bound Brotherhood, it helps you in ways that you probably wouldn’t even understand. So stay committed to the program, stick to it” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016).
College Bound Brotherhood is a program specifically for African American high school boys within the “College Bound Hayward Program.” There are two other sections as well within the larger initiative: College Bound Hayward is open to 9th - 12th graders and Rising Scholars is open to 7th and 8th graders. These programs are intended to provide students and their families with educational workshops to help parents successfully navigate the educational system; public speaking, leadership, cultural awareness and community service opportunities; financial literacy; career exploration; and customized college tours. The program also provides an opportunity for parents, students and educators to communicate more effectively (Hayward Unified School District, 2015). In this study the focus is specifically on the College Bound Brotherhood.

The purpose of the study was to understand the experiences of students in the College Bound Brotherhood and how these experiences may lead to students’ positive outcomes that have been noted by Hayward Unified School District, including reduction of disciplinary actions, improved academic success, and increased attendance. Based on information collected from focus groups, interviews, and field notes, College Bound Brotherhood students had three main experiences–family meetings, college tours, and case management. These experiences in turn helped students build relationships and promoted a college going culture that has changed their perspective of themselves and their futures, which I argue have contributed to the improved outcomes documented by the district. I have organized the data analysis into three main themes: relationship building, creating a college going culture, and perceiving the program and College Bound Brotherhood students. Under each of those themes I discuss the related experiences that impacted the study participants. These themes and experiences are represented in the graphic below.
Relationship Building

The experiences provided by College-Bound Brotherhood provided opportunities for relationship building on multiple levels. For example, relationships emerged between the students themselves. During focus groups, College Bound Brotherhood students spoke of the relationships and bonds that had formed between them as a way to “make each other stronger.” Focus group students also discussed that the program has strengthened their family relationships, as the Brotherhood has given them new topics of discussion within their households. Additionally, students reported that the relationships they built with caring adults, such as their case managers and other College Bound Brotherhood staff, have given them a sense of support outside of their families in a school setting that is not always nurturing. Focus groups and interviews revealed that the right relationships can provide one with access to resources and additional relationships. Below, I describe the experiences students have had to build these relationships, including village meetings and leadership opportunities.

Village Meetings. Village Meetings, also known as “Saturday Sessions,” are gatherings of all the students of College Bound Brotherhood and their parents. In the meetings, students pledge their commitment to the program, receive information about events and deadlines for scholarships, share research the students have done around scholarships and Black History, and also have opportunities for public speaking (Concerned Parent Alliance: Programs and Services, n.d.). Because they nurtured the relationships between students, families, CBB staff and any community members invited as special guests, the village meetings were an integral and influential component of the program on both the students and their parents. When attending College-Bound Brotherhood Saturday events, it was apparent that connections were being made amongst the Brotherhood, between College Bound Brotherhood students, between parents, with
their families, and with College-Bound Brotherhood staff through the activities and welcoming environment, which I discuss below.

The village meeting, I attended provided insight into why these meetings were so influential on students and their families. To begin the meeting, Dr. Darlene Willis—the founder of the Concerned Parents Alliance, Inc. non-profit provides the College Bound Hayward programs as well as programs in other cities and districts—explained the importance of my study and emphasized how important it is to encourage other African-Americans to further their education. She said because sharing their stories would be a way to help the community, she would be giving students who participated in the study community service hours. After the meeting, many parents came to me and said how excited they were for their students to have an opportunity to share their experiences. One of them said specifically, “My son has quite a story to share” (Field Notes, Dec, 2015). The parents’ enthusiasm about their children sharing their experiences with me is an indication that the program has empowered parents and their children to share their stories publicly and make their voices heard.

*Shared experiences between students and parents.* Students and their parents build further relationships around common experiences in meetings. For example, at this particular Saturday meeting, students had watched a video of the speech, “I’m Black, and I’m Proud of It!” by Martin Luther King Jr. (Facebook: I Love Being Black, 2016). In the speech, Dr. King described that, although being African American has been historically couched as being bad, members of the African American community should be proud. He states, “I’m black and I’m proud of it. I am black and beautiful.” Guided by the superintendent, who is the parent of one of the College Bound Brotherhood students, students were asked what they thought of Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech. In response, many of College Bound Brotherhood students said that they were proud of who they are, and discussed how relevant Martin Luther King’s words are still today.
Others noted that they were inspired by Dr. King’s speech and aimed to work harder to “be who they can become.” All of College Bound Brotherhood students’ responses were welcomed with cheers and claps and their voices were honored. Alongside their students, parents also shared their thoughts in the meeting and on the clip from Dr. King regarding what it meant for them and their children. The shared experience and the open dialogue about what Martin Luther King and other information that is shared at other meetings assists with relationship building. The information opens further conversations after the village meetings.

**Pledges and recitation.** In this particular meeting, students also recited several pledges, which served as reminders of their commitment to the program and their commitments to themselves. These recitations echo their own expectations and their inspiration to become college students and graduates. For example, they recited the Pledge of Allegiance and they sang Lift Every Voice: The National Negro Anthem, which connects them to their Blackness. The ritual reminds them of the struggle that many Black citizens have faced historically in the US and other citizens continue to face at today’s historical moment. The students also contemplate who can be where and who they are today. The song speaks of a “New Day Begun” and says, “Let us march on ‘til victory is won.” College Bound students recited the Self-Reliance Pledge, which reminds them of their responsibility to themselves, and the Made Hayward Pledge, which reminds them to be proud of their community and that the students are bound for college. Finally, students recited the Time Commitment Pledge, which reminds them of their commitment to attending College Bound events on time. Participating in these pledges and songs gives College Bound Brotherhood students a sense of belonging, and reminds them of how important they are to their country, the African American community, and their families.

**Learning and research.** There is a research component to the program in which students must investigate and share with the Brotherhood on two topics: Black History
and available scholarships. During the session I attended, Darlene Willis shared a Black History moment in which she discussed J. Johnson and his role in black history. Students were asked to share scholarship information that they had found, and those who shared could earn credit towards college tours. Discussing the research portion of the meetings, one student explained information that he found important and beneficial:

“Dr. Willis would teach us like just little things about random people from Black History which I never knew existed and things new to me about like just colleges and stuff and scholarships.” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016)

As students shared scholarship information that they had found, the other boys took notes and decided if the particular scholarships could apply to them. Parents and students also commented on the information that was shared, and students were encouraged to look into each of the scholarships further. During this portion of the meeting, the case managers shared updates about students who had completed and returned applications for scholarship and college admissions. The sharing of information among the Brotherhood and with their parents and mentors creates a cooperative culture and the bonds between them supporting each other to move towards college admission and sharing scholarship information.

**Guest speakers.** During the Family Meetings, guest speakers, who range from Superintendent Stanley Dobbs of Hayward Unified School District to staff members of the program to students’ own parents, talked with students and families regarding a variety of topics. These include ways that speakers started their own businesses, got into college, and utilized the NCAA Clearinghouse to get recruiters to notice them for scholarships. Others share inspirational and powerful life experiences, such as how belief and resources helped them navigate high school and enter four-year colleges. Another of the speakers discussed a program called Youth Mentorship Outreach Movement,
which is a non-profit organization designed to support young students of color, and shared information about a youth conference call for youth in need of support with life skills that was coming up. Still others discuss pathways to college and finding funding, such as a parent who discussed the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Clearinghouse for students attending universities on sports scholarships:

“The NCAA Clearinghouse is an essential step in becoming eligible to play college sports. Over 180,000 potential college athletes register with the NCAA every year. If you want to play NCAA college sports and receive a scholarship at the DI or DII level, you will need to register and be cleared by the NCAA. The Eligibility Center is the organization within the NCAA that determines the academic eligibility and amateur status for all NCAA DI and DII athletes” (AthNet, n.d.).

These provide examples of resources provided to students in order to navigate systems and difficulties during adolescence. The conference call provided a forum where students could discuss with other student and mentors about school and life issues.

**Parent Interactions and Voice.** Another important component of the relationship building is the opportunity for parents to become engaged in the program. The parents share their thoughts and develop their voice with respect to their sons’ education. These opportunities were presented to parents through village meetings, College Bound and African American Student Achievement Initiative events, Board Meetings, and Local Control Funding Accountability Town Hall meetings at the district. At these events, parents were encouraged to interface with district level conversations and feel empowered to discuss the needs and experiences of their sons. Ms. Smith, the parent participant of the study, was engaged by the opportunities to attend district events, especially the village meeting where she learned about scholarships and other information.
for her son on the road to university. She felt the major benefits for her were learning about the different ways that her son could pay for college. She shared the following:

“The major benefits of the program are informing the parents on the different avenues of being able to find money for college scholarships, internships, and one of the things that I like is there are scholarships.” In addition, Ms. Smith learned about different pathways to employment, including “…all the information that they provide you about being able to go to college and that you have more than one choice if you don’t go to college … you can go the vocational way or through the military as long as you keep one of those tracks your future should be fine.” (Interview, Feb. 2, 2016)

While we know that this doesn’t in fact guarantee that their futures will be fine and that there will undeniable still have obstacles and challenges in their futures, this quote indicated this mother feels that they will be better equipped for their future endeavors. Her quote also indicated the need for continued education for families as her last statement is not well informed. There is still a need to challenge policies and practices that might block African American students to succeed in college or after college. The future may not be “fine” for some students who do not go to college, let alone for those who go to college. The data shows the College Bound Brotherhood gives students and parents the information and skills to enter college and may provide some confidence and social capital to help succeed. However, the program does not change policies and practices that often block African American boys from succeeding in college. Lack of resources, cultural disconnect at the university, racists attitudes are just a few barriers. The program is limited in that it cannot address policy formations outside of the school. In order for African American boys to enter and also achieve in the college setting there is a need for changes in policy beyond the K-12 setting.
All the focus group students, Ms. Smith, and Jimmy stated that the program has made the bond stronger between parents and students. One way this occurs is through discussions at home about what students and parents have learned in the program with other family members. For example, Ms. Smith updates her spouse on the information learned during the Saturday meetings, and she felt that the experiences in the Saturday family meetings and the College Tours have opened up different conversations for her family. Families now discuss school, grades, and scholarships. These parents have also talked with case managers together to support school issues and needs for their son. Although she is taking more of an active role in her son’s education, she believes that her son feels more pressure because the program has made her more aware of what is happening at school. She shared,

“He feels more pressure sometimes. I feel that he tries to pull away when I ask him questions about things. He gets good grades and he does his work; but, when it comes to classes where he struggles a bit. He kind of pulls back and doesn’t want to talk about it, and then we have to try to figure out how to get him help. That’s one of the issues we’re having now” (Interview, Feb. 2, 2016).

Students in focus both groups agreed that the Saturday sessions of the program have made the parents more aware about school and college. Students also agreed, as Ms. Smith stated above, that they talk to their parents more because College-Bound Brotherhood has opened up more conversations about A to G requirements, their current school activities, their collegiate futures, and black history. When asked whether attending College-Bound Brotherhood has strengthened parent-student connections at home, one student said, “Yeah, I talk to my dad more, starting to bring down the walls and letting him in” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016). Likewise, another student felt that he was connecting more with his family because they now have something to talk about—
specifically, college. Although his mother went to college, his father did not. His father also was unaware of concepts like the SAT, ACT, GPA, and community service. The student shared that the program provides him with a language to use with his father to share in his experience. Another student reflected that he feels that his parents have more faith in him now to do well academically, and he believed it was because this program is focused on the African American boys like himself. He also states that because he is the program he feels that he can succeed regardless of race. This implies that because College Bound Brotherhood takes an affirming stance toward African American boys, parents have developed a more affirming stance toward their children.

Most of College Bound Brotherhood students also shared that their parents were enthusiastic about the program and looked forward to the monthly meetings. Only one boy did not share that sentiment. He stated that his father works on Saturdays and therefore encourages him to go to the events and to prepare for college for himself. Most parents, however, regardless of how tired students might be on Saturday, encouraged students to attend meetings because they believe in the benefits of the program and looked forward to connecting with other parents and students themselves. One student explained,

“My parents are… happy about [the program] and they are pushing me to go even though a lot of times I don’t want to get up Saturdays. I just want to relax. They are like ‘this is gonna benefit you later on. I don’t care what you want to do. You are gonna go.’… I’ve adapted to it. I’m just like, ‘Okay I’ll go and… maybe learn a little here and a little there” (Focus group, Jan. 8, 2016).

Students felt that the parents were more excited about the village meetings than they were. Parents saw it as a form of family bonding time: a time to open up further conversations on the ride home. When asked about why they were in the program, most
boys in the focus groups stated were doing it specifically for the families. Students provided a variety of specific reasons: to make them happy, proud, or to go to college when their parents could not. Some have parents who were unable to attend college for a variety of reasons: sports injuries, teen pregnancies, and other life choices. One student described his parents’ enthusiasm in the following way: “They’re enthused by the way we are trying to work…they look forward every Saturday. It’s like Christmas to them. They are like ‘let’s go, oh my gosh, oh my gosh.’ That’s my mom and dad for you” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016). When discussing the excitement experienced by parents and the “like Christmas” effect, one student described the ride home as follows:

“The car ride home is kinda like we just talk about…you learned that day when we separate when the parents will be in the gym. We’ll kind of tell each other what we talked about there. So my mom will tell me what she heard in the meeting and I’ll tell her what we did in the library…it’s just a good talk.” (Focus Group, Jan, 8, 2016)

Ms. Smith, whose son is in both AVID and College Bound Brotherhood, noted the difference between the two was a lack of parent engagement in AVID. She explained, “The difference is that AVID doesn’t really seem to involve parents. It puts more pressure on the students. I think I’ve only been aware of two meetings for AVID that the parents were required to come to and then everything else is left up to the student.” (Interview, Feb. 2, 2016). This is significant because College Bound Brotherhood’s parent component empowers parents to engage in conversations about their students and their needs at district meetings and at the site level and causes them to feel involved with the process of supporting their boys on the road to their collegiate careers.

**Student Interaction and Voice.** Focus group students saw the Brotherhood as a way to connect with other African-American males in school and a way to create
unity among the students in the College Bound Brotherhood. One student described it as a fraternity at the high school level, and indeed, many of them call each other “brother.” Students from the second focus group shared that they work to help each other in academic and other ways. One student said, “When one falls you gotta pick back up and you’re right there. You gotta be a unit” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016). Focus group students in the second group commented that they want to know each other better because of brotherhood. “I feel like it’s brought us all together as one now, like all of us brothers, as one now… Unity” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016). They look for “brothers” that are struggling and help them transform their grade (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016).

College Bound Brotherhood students feel that they have a common purpose and mission, “Brotherhood students we come together and we do what needs to be done (Focus Group, Jan. 2016). These students believe that the college tours have also created a deeper connection between the College Bound Brotherhood boys, “…we just came together a lot especially when we go on tours together we always well sometimes we even talk to each other and stuff but it actually brings us a lot together and when you go out and try to meet new people or people that we meet the big people it helps you” (Focus Group. Jan. 2016).

There was a noticeable difference between the relationships of College Bound Brotherhood students in the two groups. In the first focus group, College Bound Brotherhood students were closest to those in the program whom they had known since middle school or with whom they played sports. Rather than “brothers,” they saw each other as competitors who try to excel academically. Some mentioned that they see others as role models based on their academic excellence. Outside College-Bound Brotherhood meetings and events they had little meaningful interaction—students reported that they just say “hi” to each other unless they were in sports or classes together. Some of College Bound Brotherhood students in the room did not even know the names of some other boys in the focus group with them. They said that for some of them they only saw
each other at the monthly meetings. They did, surprisingly, say that they have a better connection because of the program. This seemed to contradict some of the statements of some students in the room. One student stated that with regards to their connection to other boys in the program, “We make ourselves stronger” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016). This was a surprising comment from this student since the students said they were not as close to many of the other students in the program. Perhaps it has deepened existing relationships between boys that had already known each other in other contexts.

**Case Management.** One of the components of the College Bound Brotherhood is case management. The case managers serve many purposes, including that of role model. For example, case managers work with students and provide perspective and examples of how to get to and through college. In other words, case managers provide living examples for College Bound Brotherhood students in the program. The focus group students perceived that African-American males who held degrees from universities and colleges had the ability to support and lead them on the right path towards college and career readiness.

Based on feedback during the focus groups, mentorship is a large benefit of College-Bound Brotherhood. They found the case managers to be role models and have encouraged College Bound Brotherhood staff to add more case managers with similar characteristics, caring and college graduates with experiences that they are willing to share. Surprisingly, none of College Bound Brotherhood students felt that the case managers were invasive, although they had access to their school records and approached them when concerns arose. In fact, the focus group students felt more connected to case managers than any other staff members on campus.

**Mentorship.** When asked about current case managers College Bound Brotherhood students in the second focus group said, “Keep them. Keep them and bring many more like them” (Focus Group, January 26, 2016). They shared that some
case managers are coaches or former sportsmen and they all went to college. College Bound Brotherhood students were also pleased that they meet with the case managers organically or as their needs arise. They perceived that if there were a set time that they had to meet with them it would “throw off the relationship” (Focus Group, January 26, 2016). Students indicated that there may be a time that a boy needs to meet with a case manager and it may be someone else’s turn, and thus waiting may take away the authenticity of the relationship.

Focus groups students also believed that case managers push them to do better and help them with difficult teachers. Case managers call students in to discuss this information and make plans to support them to increase their GPAs and offer to meet with students and their teachers. For example, one Case manager explained the importance of the mentorship component of the program: “Even if there wasn’t funding for this program maybe [there should still be] some mentorships. I think the kids really benefit from one-on-one relationship with somebody outside of school: someone who isn’t always talking to them about grades, [Adults who] are more concerned with their daily lives as well” (Interview, Case Manager).

Advocacy. Case managers and students both speak of the benefits of having mentors support them with grades staff and other needs on site, such as checking in on grades, finding out about missing assignments, and asking for support for students struggling and students with special needs. For example, case managers worked as liaisons between students and school staff and requested support for students and accessed student data and grades to provide support even before students request support. One student commented on the benefit of having his case manager support his parent with talking to the teachers. He attributes the improvement in his grades to the collaboration of his parents and case manager, “I’ve communicated with my parents and my parents have communicated with the case managers and they have talked to her and
I’ve talked to her and slowly my grade has risen” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016). One case manager commented on how he feels more at ease speaking with school staff knowing that the program is in its second year and staff are more accepting of it. He noted that it was more difficult in the first year of implementation of the program to get teachers to support the program and help students with letters of recommendation as students applied to college. “It’s been a lot …easier you know to approach staff with our concerns and with the student concerns other” (Interview, Jan. 15, 2016). Sometimes the parents ask case managers to request support, and managers act as liaisons between the teachers and parents/students. Case managers also access data and other information to ensure that students have assignments and assessments turned in and recorded in the districts assessment and data interface. This is needed because it may help to keep teachers accountable to parents and students. For example, Ms. Jones felt that many staff were not inputting the data that she should be able to access for her student to keep her aware of all of the things that are happening and grades that are being submitted. When this happens, case managers talk to teachers to get information that may not be uploaded. Some students attribute support with teacher by case managers to increased GPAs. When Jimmy was asked how his case manager helps him with school concerns, he replied,

If I’m missing assignments because I’m starting to have trouble with infinite campus [the data interface where students, parents, and staff can access grades and assignments] …sometimes it doesn’t let me so I can’t check homework so I would ask [the case managers]. Like I asked … if he could crank out my missing assignments for my classes … because I wasn’t completely sure on the time limits for one class…I only have two or three missing assignments and I was just not sure which weeks [they were due] and stuff like that. (Interview, Feb. 3, 2016)
With this comment, the student demonstrates how much the student values the interaction with the case manager and attributes his success to their support and guidance.

**Reminders.** Case managers also give students reminders through email and text of upcoming events. According to students, in these emails, case managers ask questions that show that case managers are genuinely concerned about student welfare:

> It makes me feel like [the case managers] are just there for us. It makes us feel like [they] actually care. Like some teachers, they just walk around and they see you like, “Oh, hi” –not really worried about you. But … [the case managers] really ask us questions that people wouldn’t ask unless they really cared. (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016)

Case managers also assist with college tours (which I discuss in the next section), connecting with their teachers by speaking with teachers on behalf of students and checking when assessments and assignments are missing, and any issues students have. The case manager said that he and the other case managers had built a rapport with some students. They were still working on ways to help students to become more committed to their studies and future college careers. College Bound Brotherhood students considered case managers like older brothers who could prevent them from going through trouble that could be prevented, as shown by the quote below.

> I feel like [case managers] are kind of like that older brother… they’ve like gone through the stuff and they are trying to like prevent you from going through the same struggles that they went through. They’re looking out for you and they’re trying to be there to support you through the things that you’re doing… they are here almost every day to like help us and like they keep up with us. They ask us questions when they see us they say things to make sure that we know that they’re
there to help us and I think that’s a great aspect to the College-Bound Brotherhood program. (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016)

**Lack of Teacher Relationships.** Case managers are also tasked with helping students in the program connect with their teachers by having conversations with the teachers on behalf of students and checking on assignments and assessments. However, the student I interviewed did not have close relationships with any current teachers. The students were asked how being in the College Bound Brotherhood affected their interactions with teachers and other staff and they recounted some of their experiences with staff. In the absence of strong teacher student relationships in some cases, the College Bound Brotherhood has been one way that students can connect to caring adults. However, Jimmy was unable to name a current teacher that he felt close to. When asked who he was most connected with, he named a teacher he had three years ago, which is concerning. This lack of teacher connection indicates the need for relationship building between students and school staff, specifically teachers.

The Jimmy shared about his connections or lack of connections with teachers. He was most connected to one teacher. “… I haven’t really tried to make a lot of connections with most of my teachers. I usually just stop by sometimes and say ‘Hi.’ But personally, I’m kind of a bit shy. But one teacher pops up. His name is Mr. Pitney and even though I never tried to make like a giant connection with him. We’ve always just gotten along in class and we try and we would always just be on good terms and I wouldn’t say as far as like calling each other friends” (Interview, Jan. 15, 2016). I note this here because this teacher has really made an impression on this student, but with the other students in the focus groups, there were mostly teachers who had not made any genuine connections with the students in the Brotherhood. Students seem to be most connected with their case managers.
Another student recalled interactions with one of his teachers. He felt that the teacher did not treat him with respect. He noted that negative interactions with the teacher affected his ability to be successful academically. He also recalled teachers who showed him respect and showed that they cared about him and helped him to be successful in class and with his academics. One example of a non-functional teacher relationship was a teacher who he perceived was not trying his best to educate the students and seemed to have had an issue with. The boy sharing the following, “I didn’t feel like he was teaching us and he didn’t have the best attitude towards me. And that kind of like affected the way that I acted towards him. And the bad part about that whole scenario was that affected my grade in his class and so that just that kind of gave me a bad perspective of him and his teaching ways” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016). The student felt that the relationship with the teacher was a detriment to his ability to learn in the classroom.

The same student recounted a teacher with a better rapport and attitude toward students. He stated that this communication and relationship makes his want to try harder:

“… I’ve come to an English class where they teach me and interact and we actually do good. We have a good relationship. He’s a good teacher. He helps me. We communicate. That’s good. So like I just I try to give my best attitude towards most of my teachers” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016).

He further shared how a teacher’s attitude towards students affects the classroom environment. He shared that he treats teachers with the same respect or lack of respect that teachers give him, stating,

“If they don’t give me the best attitude…but if you don’t try to give me a good attitude, its gonna eventually come back around where it its gonna happen back to you…I’m not gonna have the best day… ‘I don’t like you and you’re not doing the best to help me and my class and I don’t appreciate that’” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016).
My son and my relationship building with College Bound Brotherhood

I had to bring my son with me for village meeting observations. He was immediately brought forward to sit with the rest of the brothers and was included in all of the events that day. Watching my own son engaged in the conversations and community building renewed my sense of hope with regard to the African American community and reminded me what empowerment looks like. Listening to my own son share about not only Martin Luther King and Black History Month, but also about college, was amazing. Hearing him talk with me about which scholarships were available and what he needed to do to be prepared for college was refreshing and inspiring. My ride home with my child included conversations about what he would need to do and what his ambitions and aspirations would be. He also mentioned that his older brother, my stepson, was in his senior year of high school and had not taken the SATs. He became a bit worried for him. This from my 11-year-old! So not only was I inspired by the meeting, my child was as well. What an encouragement! My expectation is that my son will learn a great deal in Rising Scholars next year. From my interactions with my son since that one conversation, I would conclude that these meetings give students a sense of belonging. My son cannot wait until he begins College Bound Hayward next year.

In addition, from that day until this we continue to have conversations about scholarships and universities that he is interested in. Lately, the conversation has been around Stanford as we also discussed the tour I attended with College Bound Brotherhood students and San Jose State because of its animation deportment. He truly believes that Stanford is a possibility for him. I remember Stanford being my dream school, and having a multitude of adults telling me it was out of reach. This program makes College Bound Brotherhood students feel that with hard work anything is possible, widens their horizons, and shows them possibilities that students may not have otherwise.
Another interaction that I witnessed during a meeting almost brought me to tears. One student was having family troubles, and had shared this information with the Brotherhood staff prior to the meeting. At the end of the meeting, the student was brought to the middle of the community circle. Everyone stood around that student hand in hand, showing him respect and support, and reminding him that Brotherhood was a family of which he was a valued member. The students were brought to the center and introduced, his story was shared with the group and he was told that if he needed anything that this group was here to support him. Having that type of interaction and community building lets students know that they are not alone and there is a support system in place to help meet his needs.

**Creating a College Going Culture**

The second major theme that emerged was creating a college going culture. That is a school culture that “cultivates an aspiration and behaviors conducive to preparing for, applying to and enrolling in college” (Corwin & Tierney, 2007, p. 3). There are many aspects of the program that have created that culture. Some of these were discussed in the last section about relationship building, such as Village Meeting where student learned about scholarships, *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FASFA), the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) clearinghouse and applying for college. In this section, I will discuss the aspects of the college tours that further the work of creating a college going culture.

While on tours students build relationships with college officials, see college as a place they belong, and get an experience with college life. Next, I describe the college tour format, followed by the ways that the college tours help students to build connections that will support their preparation and readiness for college and build a sense
of belonging on college campuses. College tours are generally paid for by the parents of College Bound students. Some students win money towards these tours or fully paid tours based on work that they do: including being an officer and completing community service. Case managers accompany College Bound students on the tours. On each tour students are encouraged to ask questions that are given students on a worksheet. They are taken to the colleges in a Hayward Unified School District bus. Dr. Willis prepares experiences for the students by collaborating with college officials that she is connected to in a variety of ways: people she has worked with, Sorority sisters, and friends of her family.

**Connections.** Jimmy and his mother did not have to pay for the first trip because he was a president in the program. He said, “…this year even though I don’t think I will be getting a free trip, I’m still going to be paying for the trip just to be able to be going anyways” (Interview, Jan.15, 2016). Jimmy had gone on the last college tour at the expense of College Bound Brotherhood, but here he indicates that attending these tours is so important that his mother is willing to pay for him to go on the next tour. The case manager that was interviewed agreed that one of the benefits of the program is the College Tours because they nourish a college going culture. College tours help to build college going culture by allowing students to engage in activities on college campuses, and connecting them to people who will help them as they prepare to attend colleges. In addition, they send a message to students that college is attainable and necessary. As the case manager put it, “… The college tours we take [College Bound Brotherhood Students] on…he probably wouldn’t have done without us” (Interview, Jan. 15, 2016).

**College Officials.** Students found the college tours to be most beneficial of all of the components of the College Bound Brotherhood because of the connections that they made with college officials who shared their contact information. Consequently, they felt empowered to take their journey to and through college into their own hand.
All of the students spoke of the connections that they made on the tours, and felt that these tours were special because of these connections. Even the conversations amongst the Brotherhood and the mentors that accompany students on the trip I attended were a constant reminder the importance of relationships to students enrolling in college, finding ways to finance college, and building of the college culture that has begun at Hayward High School. One student in the focus group reflected on the connections he made during the tour, sharing, “I got to meet a lot of important people… It’s good to have connections on our pathway to college” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016). This student was also able to get emails and other contact information for future communication as they apply to and attend the universities where the connections are college employees.

Like the student above, Jimmy also noted that the tours with college bound brotherhood are different from other tours because there are officials who they are allowed to connect with. He described, “One trip we went on was the college-bound Southern California trip. We went down there and got private tours, not like just a regular tour they give out… we met the head people [officials], which was a great experience for me” (Interview, Jan. 15, 2016). He also noted that the officials, such as the admissions counselor at San Jose State, also continued their relationships with College Bound Brotherhood students after the tours. The officials who students met then became resources as they continued on their pursuits toward their college careers, supporting them with ongoing resources and communication like sharing requirements and resources for admission. Jimmy recalled,

When we went to USC and we got to talk to the [an admissions counselor at] the University …we got her email like her personal work email and we can all email her and talk about stuff with her. She gave us SAT words to improve our
vocabulary for the SAT … little things like that will improve our chances so we can get into college (Interview, Jan. 15, 2016).

On the tour I attended, students were able to talk with admissions counselors, vice presidents and other college officials and had conversations with all of them. At San Jose State, they met the Vice President of the University, who came out of a meeting to speak with them personally. In his conversation with students, he described how important it was for students to find a college that was the right fit for them. First, he said he wanted to be sure that his University had welcomed them with open arms. Then, he told them how ready they needed to be for the business of being in college. Finally, he gave an eloquent speech on the back porch of the administration building of the campus, spoke with families and students in a frank and engaging manner, and took time to shake hands with families and talk to students one-on-one. Also at San Jose State, the students were able to talk with an admissions counselor, from whom they learned about yearly tuition, eligibility indexes (the combination of test scores and grade point averages required to meet minimum eligibility requirements to attend a particular college), A through G courses (courses that must be completed to qualify to apply to a four-year university), and demographics of San Jose State. Much to the surprise of the San Jose State admissions counselor, the College-Bound students completely understood the A through G requirements for university entrance and were able to explain them to her.

These types of conversations with universities happened on several college tours. One of the Focus Group students commented that having conversations with university officials increased students’ confidence and helped them practice certain ways of speaking that will be a resource to them later. Another student reflected on the benefits of these connections by stating, “I think I have good speaking skills and it helped out with College-Bound Brotherhood from going places and getting to talk with people that is
that resource and being able to talk to them and it helps boost up my confidence” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016).

Access to college officials has been facilitated by College Bound Brotherhood staff and their connections. Additional connections that have been made are those made by the founder of Concerned Parents Co, Darlene Willis, who is a member of a traditionally African-American sorority. Because of that connection and those she has with previous colleagues and family friends, she has connections on several campuses. She has also worked at several campuses therefore she has connections to many administrators on college campuses across California. Those connections have made the College-Bound Brotherhood at Hayward High School advantageous to all students who enroll in the College-Bound Brotherhood and College-Bound Hayward, which services a host of other diverse populations. Students have had the opportunity to go behind the scenes during college tours, meeting several college officials. There are also many university officials who have even visited College Bound Village Meetings and the College Bound Hayward anniversary gathering.

**Student perceptions of the college tours for College Bound.** One student new to the program compares the program’s tours to those of another program he was in in the past, “It’s my first year in College-Bound Brotherhood… I’m really looking forward to the Oregon College tour. I’ve been in a different program called STEM Steps and we only went on one college tour” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016). STEM STEPS for Success Scholars Program provides intensive STEM and college awareness experiences to participating students through project based curriculum units and exploration activities (AAREA, 2016). This student perceived that multiple opportunities to attend college tours was an aspect of College Bound Brotherhood that STEM STEPS did not offer.

Another student, Jimmy, compared AVID and College Bound Brotherhood tours because he is enrolled in both programs. He saw the connections provided by the College
Bound Brotherhood tours and an advantage over the AVID tours he had attended. “… I went on the So Cal trip for AVID which is really basically like the same thing. …. But the really big difference was we got to meet a lot on important people at these schools and get a lot of contacts … because of that it was better than the AVID tour” (Interview, Jan.15, 2106). This is another example of how much students value the connections and contacts that they may continue to utilize after the College Bound Brotherhood if they attend schools where these contacts are and continue those relationships. AVID is a college readiness system that intends to “develops learning, study and academic behavioral skills that are essential to success in rigorous coursework. It acts as a catalyst for schools to develop a culture of college readiness for all students across the campus” (AVID: College and Career Readiness, n.d.).

**Experiences of Belonging.** Another benefit of the college tours is that students gain confidence and realize that they belong in college. While at Stanford, students received a tour and had time to speak with alumni who were currently working with the First Generation, Low Income Partnership (FLIP) which focuses on building a community for these students (Stanford: Wellness, 2016). During this tour, Students had conversations with three of Stanford staff who were alumni and had been enrolled as first-generation and low income students. These Stanford staff members reminded College Bound Brotherhood students that they belonged on campuses like Stanford. “You belong here.” Next, Stanford FLIP staff also shared that once there, students would receive support from students like them. A poignant comment that one of the FLIP staff said to students was, “I can give it to you but what you gonna do with it”. In other words, although students were on the campus and were receiving information and support that would help them on their path to and through college. This comment resonated with students as it is a line from a rap song by Jay-O Felony featuring Method Man and DMX that most of the students knew. Cultural references like this make students feel more
connected to the college experience. Knowing that staff and students at Stanford listened to the same music that they knew, made the connectedness stronger made them feel at home on college campuses. Interacting with FLIP staff and other college and students of color was beneficial because students saw college attendees that looked like and had experiences like themselves.

_Experiences with college life._ When students visited campuses, they took part in the same activities that college attendees would, such as eating in the dining areas with college students, meeting with school staff, seeing some of the cultural centers on campus. This provides students with the opportunity to …. It also gives them the feeling that …. One focus group student reflected that these experiences made him want to succeed in school, “…going to those colleges and seeing that environment and seeing where you can go it brings a lot of like inspiration for you to do better.” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016).

At Stanford students also were able to visit the African American community services Center. They heard the experiences of three current African-American students and were allowed to ask questions. One of the students worked at the center were student development and learning are advanced. They also foster community engagement; promote diversity, inclusion and respect, they also intend to empower students to thrive” (Stanford Student Affairs, n.d.). During the tours students were required to answer questions about each University. Finding the answers these questions helped students to know some of the important questions to keep in mind as they are selecting a university and a career path. One topic that came up often with College Bound Brotherhood students was, “Do we have to live on campus the first year?” These questions were distributed on the bus on the way to the tour questions included the questions like. What are the graduation rates for Stanford University and in how many years? What is your school known for? I am a College-Bound student so why should I choose your institution to
attend? Students were then asked to mark on their sheets either, “Yes, I want to attend this institution,” “No I’m not interested in applying,” or “This institution is on my maybe list.” Students were then asked to rate the school from 1-5 with 5 being the highest.

Asking questions and determining if colleges are a good fit for them reminded them that the colleges must be right for them, not only do they need to be right for colleges. It gave them a sense that they have options and can be empowered to decide the colleges that are a good fit based on evidence that they gather. Not only will they be scrutinized by colleges, they should scrutinize the colleges. On the bus ride home, many students discussed how they felt about each school with their peers and also with the case manager who had accompanied them. They discussed sports and scholarships. There was a lot of interest in what college was like. They asked the case managers and me what it was like to live on campus. There was quite a buzz. They also discussed other tours they had been on and tours that were scheduled in the future.

Connections to college and feeling of belonging that my son and I gained. On the college tour I attended the students visited San Jose State University and Stanford. I was able to share how Stanford was my dream school and that I had wanted to attend Stanford for my masters immediately following my undergraduate career. I remembered how one of my professors urged me to not apply stating that I could never get in. I am not sure if this was because I was a black girl or some other reason. I just remember that I always regretted listening to him and not trying. When I returned home and saw my son, we discussed my adventurous tour and I told his information that I learned on the trip. I shared with him that Stanford pays a portion of student fees for young people that needed it. This is something I did not know. I told him that all he needed to do was qualify and that with my income we would only be paying room and board. His eyes lit up and he said, “Then I am going to Stanford!” I said, “Then you’d better start working hard.” From that day to this he has shared with others that his desire is to go to Stanford
and that he wants to be a civil rights lawyer. In addition, he has begun asking about Ivy League schools. He is so excited at the thought of college at only 11-year-old. And I can’t help but think that College Bound Hayward next year will only build that excitement and feeling of belonging on campuses. And the young woman in me, who was stifled by educators who didn’t believe in her, is cheering this kid on.

**Perceptions of the Program and CBB Students**

The final theme that emerged from my analysis was the way that the program has been received by different stakeholders in a variety of ways by HUSD staff, non-member students and the community at large and College Bound Brotherhood students. Perhaps most striking is the finding that College Bound Brotherhood students have a new perception of themselves as prepared to pursue college and worthy to be in the college of their choice because of their experiences in the program.

**Community perception.** The Brotherhood program has become integral part of many aspects of Hayward Unified School District. For example, College Bound Brotherhood students attended and participated as ushers and support staff for the African American Student Achievement Initiative Oratorical Festival in January 2016. At some African American Student Achievement Initiative events the Brotherhood students are utilized to support events throughout the HUSD community. The students are seen as role models to other students by the African American Student Achievement Initiative. I visited two of the College-Bound Brotherhood meetings as well as some “Made in Hayward” events where the College-Bound Brotherhood boys were in attendance and were supporting through community service. College Bound Brotherhood students came dressed to impress in their burgundy polo shirts with “College Bound Brotherhood”
printed on the back and slacks. The College Bound Brotherhood boys proved to be well-mannered and helpful ushers and helpers at the event.

As another example, while attending the LCAP (Local Control Accountability Plan) Town hall meeting in which the community came together to discuss priorities for LCAP funding, more than one of the community members in the breakout session I attended discussed the importance of the College-Bound Brotherhood. They stated that continuing funding around this program was necessary because they believe it has been an asset to African-American males and a benefit to the entire community. Having African American boys moving towards college and believing in themselves supports a positive community at schools. As the grant funding of this program will end soon, having community members request to maintain funding for the College-Bound Brotherhood as a priority during a town hall meeting is a tribute to the importance of this program and demonstrates the vast many community members perceives this program as worthwhile. According to Jimmy and his mother, College-Bound Brotherhood is an asset to students because it is creating a new image of African American boys on the Hayward High School campus and has kept them more informed about the requirements for college and beyond. Moreover, College-Bound Brotherhood’s parent engagement efforts and relationship building, discussed in the first section of this chapter, has created a college going culture by creating a collegiately informed community according to both parents and students. However, Ms. Smith expressed concern regarding members of Hayward Unified School District staff and members of the Hayward Unified School District School Board who do not believe College-Bound Brotherhood to be a meaningful program. Jimmy recalled that in his freshman year, because the College-Bound Brotherhood students were all African American, that teachers, community and non-member students criticized the program, although he said that he “really didn’t care” because he thought it
was great to have a program that was specifically designed for male African-Americans at the school site.

Through the program he felt more empowered to own his future and achieve academic excellence as an African American male students and seemed to have built the self-worth through being in the program. The program focuses on African American boys because Hayward School district data demonstrates that this particular group is less likely to graduate and be successful in college when compared to others. Despite this clear purpose, the program has been perceived by others in the district, particularly those of other racial/ethnic groups, as exclusionary.

Ms. Smith also spoke of negativity from one board member at the board meeting she attended. She also felt that College-Bound Brotherhood should be given as much weight as AVID and Puente.

But I guess from going to school board meetings, one of the drawbacks that I just recently experienced is how some of the board members recently are responding to the program. They have at least one person who at the last meeting, the last few meetings, he has shown a lot of negativity towards the program and I don’t really understand why. You know, when it’s helping the kids. We have those other programs that are incorporated into the curriculum. But this is a program that they could also put into the curriculum and give the students more than just two choices of a program of being something to get ready to go to college. (Interview, Feb. 2, 2016) Fifty-eight percent of the students have raised their grade point averages since enrollment in the program. The graduation rate data has not been posted for the 2014-2015 school year yet, so we are not able to make a comparison yet for graduation rates. However, students in the focus group all
indicated that they had support with academics and with interacting with teachers to retrieve missing assignments in order to excel academically.

Puente Project is a program that increases the number of educationally disadvantaged students who enroll in four-year colleges and universities, earn college degrees, and return to help the community (Hayward High School, 2015). Ms. Smith felt that this program should happen during the school day because it would provide more access to the program components, and that should be a part of curriculum because the other programs AVID and Puente are, and it has shown success. She noted, “But this is a program that they could also put into the curriculum and give the students more than just two choices of a program of being something to get ready to go to college” (Interview, Feb. 2, 2016). She also believes that the College Bound Brotherhood should be another way to implement a during school college readiness program to provide further opportunity to students who are on track or even interested in attending college.

“*It’s a good program. But maybe if it was offered as a class like the other programs, that would help also. Puente and AVID, the students can choose those…if they had college-bound like that, that could be an option too. Because with three programs that could cover all the students who want…to be in one of those programs. If you couldn’t get into the other ones, then you’d have a third program that would have space for you.*” (Interview, Feb. 2, 2016)

**Hayward Unified Staff Perceptions.** Despite the layers of relationship building, as noted in the first section, the need for strengthening of relationships with teachers emerged from the data. While there was a need to strengthen relationships, there was divergence in the perception around staff desire to support the program from the outset. For instance, Mr. Robinson, teacher, believed that teachers’ desire to support the program, but were not given information and resources to do so. Mr. Robinson said that he wished
teachers had more information about the program and how students are recruited. However, Jimmy’s case manager, mother, and Jimmy himself all saw staff as being minimally supportive last year. This year, however, they saw a lot more supportive this year than last year. The case manager indicated that last year was more difficult because it was a pilot program and the program and case managers were building rapport with students and with the staff. He mentioned that it could be better. He said it is a lot easier to approach staff with concerns. Mr. Robinson believes that with more information about the program he and other teachers would be better equipped to support the College Bound Brotherhood. He also thought that the program should be strategic in which teachers with whom they shared information: such as teachers who work with freshman.

“I wish we did have more information about that. It would be nice… and how they recruit… because especially for someone who teaches all freshman and I teach lower-level freshman and I can see potential in some and some of the students that could if they got that little extra bit of support could be, really successful students and kind of things like that so yeah it would be nice to know how they recruit and who to talk to and tell them, ‘Hey look at … this student or that.’” (Interview, Feb.1, 2016)

Mr. Robinson teaches all freshmen. He sees potential in some and believes that they could do better if they had the additional support that the program may provide. He would love to refer students who he feels would benefit from the program, but he doesn’t understand how students are referred to the program or if it is possible for teachers to refer students. In addition, he stated that it is likely that very few teachers know details about the program similar to his experience. According to Mr. Robinson, teachers have heard about it, but due to multiple initiatives being implemented, teachers have a hard time keeping up with all of the programs available to students. He himself had assumed
the program was like Puente and AVID but for specific set of students but did not know the details. However, Mr. Robinson felt that it was important to incorporate teacher recommendations into the selection of students for the program. It was unclear to him how students were selected and about what activities and interventions were provided to students who were in the College-Bound Brotherhood. He felt that teacher input could help with recruitment if he and other teachers could refer students who might benefit from the program, if they understood criteria, selection process, and activities included in the program they could provide more support.

Students also noted in focus group interviews that teachers and other staff treat them differently because they are in the College-Bound Brotherhood. Specifically, focus group students believed that because they are in College Bound, teachers and staff think that they will be successful in life, and therefore, they are now treated with more respect. For example, one student in the first focus group noted, “They [teachers] know I got a vision, especially because I’m in college-bound. They know I have a vision and I’m gonna do something with my life and not be a dropout” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016). In the second focus group, another student described that teachers treat them differently—“Like you got a future, like you’re going to college” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016)—and his classmate added that teachers talk to them with “high respect now” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016). Yet, another felt that knowing that he is in College-Bound makes teachers and Hayward staff want to help him and push him to the next level because staff members now know he can succeed.

But when a teacher or a staff member knows that you are in College-Bound they have a different outlook at you, like you’re kind of…you are actually wanting to do the right thing to better yourself...like you are doing this so you can go to college and
like start a career and do something that you would actually like to do instead of just working like month to month paycheck to paycheck. (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016)

**Other students’ perceptions.** Students who are not enrolled in the program were not interviewed, so I asked focus groups and interviewees their sense of how other students viewed the program. Jimmy recalled the beginning of the program in this way:

“At first we started I mean we had the meeting at the very beginning of school… all African American males went to the cafeteria and the first [meeting] people showed up, but then after each month [meeting attendance] progressively started dropping and then Mount Eden students started coming” (Interview, Jan. 16, 2016).

When I asked the first focus group why they thought other students did not attend the meetings, they believed that the other students had other priorities: “They’d rather stay home either like go hang out with their friends or go literally do like anything else but go to something that would actually help you succeed” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016).

Focus group students also noted that many students taunted them and made fun of the program.

“Most of them didn’t know what it was about. … after they talked and like told everyone what College-Bound was about … I would just hear people … make fun of it and stuff like that too, like just plain make fun of it. They are always like, ‘Yeah, I’m not going to that.’ I’m just like, ‘Aright’” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016).

Some students in the focus group could relate to the desire to make fun of such a program. One shared, “Honestly, I was at the beginning. I was one of those people that kinda like made fun of College-Bound and was like, ‘Oh, I don’t wanna go. I don’t wanna do this’” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016). They did not, however, explain why they were making fun of the program. It could be that going to college and being smart is
not considered “cool” to African American teenaged boys. Although another student thought that other boys may not like the atmosphere: “I think people don’t go because it’s somewhat like a church atmosphere. If you go to church on Sunday, you don’t wanna spend both of your weekend days … getting lectured.” Another student felt that other boys thought it was too much to have to get up on a Saturday to learn, stating, “I think some people don’t like waking up early some people would rather spend time with their friends and stuff on Saturdays instead of coming out to help their future. Or it’s that they’re not really thinking about that right now” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016).

Regarding African American boys at Hayward High School who aren’t in College Bound Brotherhood, College Bound Brotherhood students seem to have taken on a deficit view of those African-American males in their school. They felt that those students, because they are not in the College-Bound Brotherhood, are lazy, will not succeed, and don’t want anything for their lives. One student described non-member students as,

“Lazy: don’t want to do anything in life. I think some people don’t like waking up early some people would rather spend time with their friends and stuff on Saturdays instead of coming out to help their future. Or it’s that they’re not really thinking about that right now” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016).

Based on their perception of staff treatment of them because of College Bound Brotherhood enrollment, this may be how others had viewed them before the program. They viewed students not in the Brotherhood as not doing what makes the Brotherhood students successful.

“Yeah, like kids outside of Brotherhood, like our other fellow young Americans, like African-American students here, that aren’t in Brotherhood, you don’t see them doing what we do. They don’t act how we act. They’re not as a unit like us. They are kind of parted off and they’re doing their own thing. But our
Brotherhood students we come together and we do what needs to be done.”

(Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016)

Focus group students also felt that other students not in the program were not focused on their futures at this time. A student from the second focus groups also believed that non-member students do not really know what’s going on in the program and that they don’t know “how this program changes [College Bound Brotherhood students] and how [the program] brings …enthusiasm into school” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016). One student felt that those not in the program, “are missing out on opportunities to get a better understanding of the things that they should be working hard,” and, “they’re missing out on opportunities to learn more about colleges and scholarships and things that help them get to college” (Focus Group, Jan. 8, 2016). Only one of the students in the focus group thought that the other boys would join College-Bound Brotherhood if they knew the benefits offered. That student, one of the presidents of the program, said that it was important to do more outreach to insure that those students understood how powerful and meaningful their experiences with College-Bound Brotherhood are.

“… As president one of my jobs is recruiting…kids outside of Brotherhood like our other fellow young American, like African-American students here that aren’t in Brotherhood, you don’t see them doing what we do. They don’t act how we act. They’re not … a unit like us. They are kind of parted off and they’re doing their own thing” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016).

However, the majority of the focus group students saw students who are not enrolled in College-Bound Brotherhood as people who will not make it anywhere in life, a deficit view of other African-American males that is concerning and problematic.

Prior to entering the program, he was seen as seen as a delinquent because of his skin color. He felt that people see African American boys as up-to-no-good. He felt that
his and other students’ participation in the College Bound Brotherhood was changing that negative perception. This was his response,

“They [African American boys] are seen as, most of them, being bad and doing bad stuff and gangs and all of that stuff. So when people just see that I’m black, they just expect ask me to act some way. This program is helping general black people general black kids become… Just have a better life and be seen not as bad” (Interview, Jan. 15, 2016).

**College Bound Brotherhood student self-perceptions.** College Bound Brotherhood has not only changed the perceptions that the community and HUSD staff have of the boys, it has changed how they see themselves. Jimmy felt that the program changed how teachers saw students who were in the program. Additionally, he said that College-Bound Brotherhood has actually caused him to not really care what people think about him based on his race. He said that he does not feel different anymore because of the color of his skin tone, and he no longer gets discouraged about the perception others have of African American boys. Instead, that the program has made him feel more empowered as an African American male student and changed his own perception of his self-worth.

“It actually caused me to just not really care what people think about me, just like judging me on my race and stuff like that… I don’t see anything different. It’s just the color of my skin tone. Like, it doesn’t affect anything. It doesn’t affect… how I worked or anything. I still do my work my best, like the best that I can…I don’t get discouraged or anything. I’m just, I’m just regular, right?”

College Bound Brotherhood focus group students also spoke of specific Brotherhood students in very positive ways. In particular, they described that their grades
had improved and that they helped each other. They consider each other role models and inspirations to each other.

Seeing themselves as leaders. Through the multiple leadership opportunities offered by the program, students have begun to see themselves as leaders. Students are required to serve their community which gives them a sense of pride in community and self and will help as they work toward extracurricular for college’s applications and admission. Service to the community helps them to gain a sense of community leadership. Another way that they see themselves as leaders is to take on leadership roles in the Brotherhood. There is a president at every grade level to lead the college-bound charge. Officers seem to have an additional sense of responsibility to the Brotherhood and the school and the community. One of the students in the focus group that the other boys wanted join College-Bound Brotherhood if they knew the benefits offered. He mentioned that it was important to do more outreaching and insure that those students understood the powerfulness and meaningfulness of the College-Bound Brotherhood experience the sense of outreach to other students in need of the benefits of the Brotherhood was described by him as leadership. He believed that everyone in the Brotherhood had that capacity for leadership. “You don’t really necessarily need to be the officers to [recruit students into the program] anybody in College-Bound...You don’t necessarily have to be an officer and when you [recruit other into the program] that shows leadership.” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016)

An overarching idea in the College Bound program is that students need to take responsibility for their own education. Students have begun to see themselves as in control of their education. One of the focus group students recalled that what he does and the leadership roles he is taking are for him. He is taking on a leadership stance in term of his own education.
“I should be doing for me, not because he’s telling me. It’s not that he’s not supporting me. It’s that he wants me to do it for me. So that’s why when I come to the meetings and he has to work, I usually come by myself… And when I decided to run for officer, it was me. Everything I’m doing this program, is for me” (Focus Group, Jan. 26, 2016).

Although the College-Bound Brotherhood requires parent involvement, the students are given a variety of resources, training, and opportunities to meet with others. College Bound Brotherhood students are required to take on a level of responsibility for their own educational success. Many of them are taking leadership roles in their families as they become first generation college student. Students are taking a leadership role in their own roads to educational success and futures. The futures that these boys now believe can be bright and prosperous.

**Belief in their future selves.** College Bound Brotherhood students see themselves as having futures. In the first focus group, one student asked me why I had not asked about their future careers. I had ended my questions, but he was almost upset that I hadn’t asked that question and thought it was the natural next question. I agreed as we are seeing the growth of a college going culture. That group was eager to share their plans.

In the second focus group, I added this question. Because the program has provided so many opportunities to explore multiple options for college and careers, the focus group students saw themselves as having a better chance at life that those who were not in the program. Students expressed interest in majoring in kinesiology, psychology, criminal justice, engineering, and history. They plan to pursue careers such as athletic trainer, physical therapist, contracting, firefighter, detective, computer coding, video game design, mechanical engineering, NFL (National Football League), working on movies at Pixar, computer engineer, and welding. Two of them are planning to attend junior
college first, one is attending trade school, and the rest are perusing four year colleges immediately. Two are hoping for sports scholarships.

The program has been able to give parents and their students a clearer view of what is needed for college to be accepted. Students were all able to articulate the careers and college paths they anticipated for themselves. As the focus groups stated most of the boys in their school who are not in the program are not thinking about their futures or college. The case manager said that before College Bound Brotherhood the school was lacking a college going culture, especially with African American boys.

**Seeing African American Men in positions of power.** There is a value to College Bound Brotherhood students of the Brotherhood seeing African Americans in positions of power. For example, College Bound students interact on a monthly basis with Stanley Dobbs, Superintendent of Hayward Unified School District, not only because his son is in the College Bound Brotherhood, but also because he is a frequent speaker in the Village Meetings and attends all other College Bound events. On the one day that he was unable to attend, he sent assistant superintendent Matt Wayne with a message from him to ensure that College Bound families knew that he was thinking of them. In addition, College Bound Brotherhood students consider their case managers as role models. In fact, seeing these successful men taking time with them builds self-esteem for College Bound Brotherhood students. College Bound students are also afforded the opportunity to meet African American men in power who are making a difference on college campuses that they visited, like the Vice President on San Jose State University. These men hold positions of power and still take time to share their experience and knowledge with College Bound Brotherhood students. Seeing men who look like them and men of similar backgrounds reminds the boys that they, too, can aspire to such careers.

**My son and my experiences with perceptions.** My son and I have traveled this journey of the dissertation together. We have discussed the activities together and he
has joined me for most of the fieldwork. He joined me for the LCAP town hall meeting, the AASAI Oratorical Festival (because he was a competitor), the Anniversary village meeting and at least one other village meeting. What I have seem with my child, just from these few interactions is a change in perception and ideas of future careers. He is now adamant that he wants to attend Stanford or another Ivy League school, before he didn’t even know what that meant. In addition, he now has aspirations of becoming a civil rights lawyer until he becomes the president. He has always looked up to Superintendent Stan Dobbs, likely because he is an African American male in a position of power who takes the time to talk with him and he has heard him share his story. He also has changed his perspective on himself because he is always included in activities at village meetings and feels connections with the older brothers when in those meetings. He sees them as possible mentors and African American males that he can look up to now. As a matter of fact, I have seen him inspired to improve his grades this year. He can’t wait for middle school and his ability to enroll in College Bound Hayward. Frankly, I can’t wait either.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to provide rich descriptions of the day-to-day interactions and experiences of students in a case management program that has incorporated some of the factors known to support African American males in the education system. In the previous chapter, I presented the results of data analysis in relation to the research questions posed. The major themes that emerged from data collection included building relationships, creating a college going culture, and changing perceptions of College Bound Brotherhood students reflected the experiences that boys had in the College-Bound Brotherhood. The themes provided insight into how these experiences may have led to positive outcomes for the students. Specifically, my findings showed that the College Bound Brotherhood has shifted the self-perception of African American boys in the program, given voice and empowerment to parents and built on their funds of knowledge, fostered a college going culture for a previously unseen population (i.e. young African American males), and exposed the need for meaningful connections between African American boys and the teaching staff. One cannot assume that the program will usher success in college, however. This has not been determined as this has yet to be examined.

In the final chapter, I begin by discussing the significance of the boys’ changing perceptions of themselves, mentoring, and parent voice and engagement related to their sons’ academic success and college trajectories. I then describe the requirements of building a college going culture for African American boys, including the significance
of sharing the importance of the program with other students and getting teachers more closely involved. Within each of these topics, I will draw on my analysis to compare and contrast to findings of previous studies in the literature review, connect to theoretical frameworks, draw conclusions, examine implications, and recommend changes in policy and practice for the educational needs of African American boys in Hayward and in the American public school system at large. I conclude by offering recommendations for building on the successes of the program and pursuing future research.

**Changing Perceptions of College Bound Brotherhood Boys**

Students had the sense that teachers and others treated them differently based on the knowledge that they were enrolled in the College Bound Brotherhood program—specifically, that others saw them as having a future and a desire to excel academically. Students’ perceptions that teachers and other school staff saw them in this way contributed to a change in the way the students saw themselves as well. In other words, being treated as scholars and successful students has improved the self-perception of the students enrolled in the College Bound Brotherhood program. Several of the boys commented that they were treated with more respect because they are in the College Bound Brotherhood program, and now they saw themselves as leaders in their community who would be going on to pursue successful careers. Their improved self-images have, in turn, led to improved relationships with some school staff. Students’ thinking that teachers and other adults see them in a positive light has a favorable impact on those relationships because they can trust adults who see them from an assets-based standpoint and who honor their funds of knowledge (Amaro-Jiménez & Semingson, 2011).
Conversely, the fact that students perceived that they were treated differently prior to their participation in College Bound Brotherhood is problematic because it begs the question: how were the boys treated by adults in their schools prior to their enrollment in the College Bound Brotherhood program? From students’ statements, they indicated that prior to program enrollment, they were not treated with respect and were viewed by teachers as not having a future or as not striving for academic success. Part of the disconnect between teachers and African American boys can be related to the difference in the way different cultural norms apply to African American families. As Phinney (1990) notes, Black children are more likely to express anger, and they also try to explain their behaviors to teachers and take action in social situations.

Unfortunately, not all teachers have cultural competency, and may misunderstand student behaviors as defiant when they are appropriate into the student’s home and other settings outside the classroom, which negatively impacts students. Not only does it impede the building of relationships between teachers and students, it also contributes to students not seeing themselves as scholars. We can use Labeling Theory (Brick, 2009) to help us understand the perceptions of teachers on African American boys before and during the program. According to Labeling Theory, people are socially controlled based on their social status and their involvement in behaviors that are different from those of the dominant culture. In this case, the misinterpretation of African-American boys’ behavior exacerbates the false perception of these students being labeled as “bad boys,” as they already tend to be seen due to social perceptions that dominant society and culture have of students of color (Brick, 2009). Labeling students, particularly African American boys, as defiant and “bad” leads to the problem of criminalization because the boys may begin to internalize these labels placed on them by the adults who they interact with in schools and enact associated behaviors (Ferguson, 2010).
The negative effect of labeling on the self-image of those labeled and the lowering of self-image can lead to additional deviant behaviors (Brick, 2009). However, when these labels are removed and interrupted by a change of perception—as experienced by students in this study—teachers will see fewer behaviors they perceive as deviant, resulting in more positive interactions with students. In turn, students will be more likely to respect the teachers with whom they interact, which over time may lead to the development of more caring and trusting relationships between teachers and students. In addition, the shattering of the “bad boy” label also has the potential to interrupt a self-fulfilling prophecy for these boys. Geneva Gay (2000) suggests that teacher expectations are tied to student achievement, and thus, if teachers are operating under a deficit model, expectations of behavior and achievement are lowered. She describes six steps to self-fulfilling prophecy (p. 58): (1) Teacher expects specific achievement from specific students; (2) Teacher behaves towards students according to these expectations; (3) Teachers’ behaviors convey to the students what is expected of them. (4) Students internalize teacher’s expectations, affecting their self-concepts, achievement motivations, level of aspirations, classroom conduct and interactions with teachers. (5) Over time student’s behavior becomes more and more attuned to what the teacher expects. (6) Students’ achievement and other outcomes measures are affected. This suggests that if teachers operating under the deficit model perspective those perceptions will affect their expectations, which will eventually lead to self-fulfilling prophecy in students of color, further marginalizing them. With the deficit model at work, resulting in self-fulfilling prophecies, discipline, office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions become the norm in urban school sites and districts for African American boys.

**Gaining Confidence as Leaders.** Being in College Bound Brotherhood built students’ confidence so that they were able to see themselves as leaders in the school and community. As they built their own self-efficacy, they also build potential for becoming
leaders in their classrooms. Madhere (1997) suggests that grouping in classes should not only be based on academic ability, but should also include looking at self-efficacy, the belief that one has that they can succeed and accomplish a task (and for our purposes, the belief that one can achieve academic excellence and attend college). Thus, students with higher self-efficacy will facilitate cooperative learning, leading to improved psychosocial as well as academic development in students. In addition, the leadership of these students can help with peer relations. Even if these leaders have previously led others into deviant and defiant behaviors, when the leaders are mentored and supported into positive behaviors and influence, they can be encouraged to use their natural charisma to effect positive change. While other students are looking for acceptance from student leaders, positive student leadership can help others that look up to them. However, minority students who are perceived as acting “white” or achieving academically are often excluded from social interactions and teased, like the boys described in the focus groups (White, 2009).

Also importantly, students in the College Bound Brotherhood began to themselves as college bound and thus built the expectation of college attendance as imminent and a natural next step from high school. Expectations of college attendance by the school parents and peer group are important indicators for a student’s expectations for themselves to attend college (Reid, 2008), suggesting that the constant discussions of college, and reinforcement by parents, contributed to the boys’ internalizing this expectation. In addition, the students researched scholarships applicable to their skill set, visited colleges, and determined which colleges were appropriate fits for their needs and resources. Each of these contributed to their belief that there was a pathway to college laid out before them and were able to articulate their future plans.
Building Confidence through self-awareness

From their experiences in the College Bound Brotherhoods, students built a new positive view and awareness of their blackness, which led to increased self-confidence. Like College Bound Brotherhood, there are many programs that have attempted to support African American boys around the country. For example, the “Manhood Development” program in Oakland claims that it teaches students “What it means to be black” (Scott, 2014). While their literature does not provide a thorough explanation of how they accomplish this, I believe the idea has merit. Students might learn “what it means to be black” through teaching them about their African American history, exploring their current identities, and discussing the bright future ahead. College Bound Brotherhood provides an example of how this might be carried out. Their village meetings provide a safe place to share experiences of being African American, learn about Black history moments, and discuss famous speeches. As another example, AASAI (The African American Student Achievement Initiative) in Hayward, which is deeply connected to College Bound Brotherhood, does some of the work of teaching “What it means to be Black” through monthly family meetings and events. For example, recently AASAI held the Oratorical Festival, a speech competition. Titled “Standing on the Shoulders of Greatness,” the event connected students to the African American heroes of the past, which reminded them of the rich history of African Americans. Through events such as these, students develop a new sense of themselves, as a “reconceptualization of being Black and smart” (Scott, 2014).

Another way that students built self-confidence was through seeing black men in power roles and in college and other educational settings—for example, their interactions with the superintendent of Hayward Unified School District and the vice president of San Jose State. As noted by Villegas, Strom, and Lucas (2012, citing Mercer & Mercer,
1986), “when students fail to see minority adults in professional positions and instead see them overrepresented in the ranks of non-professional workers, they implicitly learn that white people are better suited than people of color to hold positions of authority in society” (p. 285). The same logic could be applied in this case—seeing black men in positions of power and on college campuses normalizes college education and power roles for them. In addition, college becomes less mysterious and unattainable as they see other black male students on college campuses. During college tours, they were exposed to the college world, and met first generation college students—important since many of the boys in the College Bound Brotherhood will be first generation college students themselves. On the Stanford tour, these college students shared some of the needs they had as first generation students and told the College Bound Brotherhood students that they belonged on campuses like Stanford. Believing that they, too, would go on to college, and seeing black men in positions of power, contributed to improving students’ self-image and future plans–thus likely interrupting the norm of criminalization for boys in the program.

**Interrupting the Labeling of African American Boys**

According to focus group and interview data, and as discussed above, there has been a change in the perception of African American Boys in the College Bound Brotherhood program thus interrupting the labeling of African American boys in the school. As we interrupt the labeling of these boys by teachers, the program begins to interrupt their criminalization as they are not seen as “bad” or delinquent. They are now seen as goal and future oriented. They are seen as students who are interested in and striving for academic excellence and as college bound. This is not just a name for a program—the boys perceive that teachers and other staff see this as a reality for them.
However, one interesting and unexpected finding was that, based on focus group data, College Bound Brotherhood students began negatively labeling other African American boys who did not take part in the program. It is not advantageous to the community for those previously misunderstood and underserved to take on the views of those with biases against African American boys. For students who have been labeled previously, but have now lost the label, they still see the way that they were viewed as a deficit. Because they want to escape those labels placed on them by teachers who subscribe to deficit thinking, they in turn label other Black students. I suggest that this may be occurring because the boys’ perception of themselves, and teachers’ perceptions of them, as college-bound may give them a form of privilege. That is, they may feel they are, and be seen by others, as “better” than the other students. This privilege leads to labeling others, just as it has with white privilege: “…the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or ‘sub-oppressors’” (Freire, 2000, p. 45).

**Powerful Case Management/Mentorship**

One of the most powerful aspects of the College Bound Brotherhood includes effective case management. The case managers act as mentors for the students who support boys with needs at the site, provide examples of how to become successful in academics and career, be an adult advocate in an environment that is not necessarily designed for their success, and build caring relationships with the boys. These boys need committed, sustained male mentorship, as Wright (2009) explains,

Mentoring is not a feel good, one-time thing…You have to open up to them, sharing with them and having that reciprocated. It’s tougher than raising your own
children. You’re limited in what you can do. You can’t pick and choose when you mentor. You have to mentor in your tough times, too” (Lewis, 2010, p.1).

The case managers demonstrate this necessary continuity. They have been working with the students for two years and hope to continue next year (pending a possible loss of funding). They have worked tirelessly to build trusting relationships, and according to the students, case management from College Bound Brotherhood has been a place of safety for the students and has created a caring adult relationship that has been lacking between students and some teachers.

College Bound Brotherhood case managers have become authentic mentors to students by supporting students with grades and the data assignment interface for the district and working with teachers to support their students. Moreover, the mentors in the College Bound Brotherhood are African American males who share the students’ cultural backgrounds. This eliminates cultural mistrust, which, along with cultural differences, has been cited as a factor that hinders mentorship effectiveness (Grimes, 2014). College Bound Brotherhood’s mentoring component also highlights the importance of finding ways to connect African American boys’ natural mentors to their school lives, which aligns with recent research showing that such mentorship will improve high school and college graduation rates (Lewis, 2010). Because the mentors are on site and accessible to students, students in the program will likely have higher graduation rates than their non-member peers. The support provided to the students by the program, including fostering connections with staff, monitoring academic and other data, and taking on liaison roles between school staff and parents, has the potential to improve other student outcomes as well. As shown by Grimes (2014), when young people are mentored properly, 98% stay in school, 98% do not become teen parents, 85% do not use drugs, and 98% avoid participation in gang activity (Grimes, 2014). This data indicates that the program
interrupts the criminalization of the African American students who are enrolled in the program as well.

College Bound Brotherhood has implemented many of the best mentoring practices expressed in the literature. For example, they have created a model that builds on student strengths, is individualized, empowers students, forges ongoing relationships, and articulates expectations and commitments (Black, 2012). Furthermore, effective case managers should deliver service in natural environment, forge community connections, and have small caseloads for frequent, flexible quality contact (Black, 2012)—all of which describe the case management provided by College Bound Brotherhood. In addition, I argue that College Bound Brotherhood’s model is particularly effective because it draws on the parents’ funds of knowledge (which will be discussed in the next section). Although the research that I cite in this section is drawn from researchers studying mental health and the justice system, it was applicable to an educational context as well, especially when the case managers’ work is framed as fostering academic health of students.

Critiques Regarding the Focus on African American Boys

Despite the positive outcomes reported in this study, College Bound Brotherhood has received some opposition from the community. In particular, some stakeholders regard the program’s specific focus on African American boys as problematic. To understand such concern about a program focusing exclusively on Black males, Minority Threat Theory offers a helpful perspective. Minority Threat theory refers to a feeling of threat due to perceived loss of control by the dominant culture (Stacey, 2010). The recent “Black Lives Matter” campaign provides a parallel illustration of how minority threat manifests. Black Lives Matter, described by the group as “an ideological and political
intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise… affirmation of Black folks’ contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression” (Kimberley, 2014), was launched in the wake of a recent string of high-profile police killings of Black men. In response to the campaign, many people—particularly those with white privilege—believed that any program or intervention that is pro-black is, by default, anti-white. This led to the “All Lives Matter” campaign. Yet, the “Black Lives Matter” campaign does not argue that other lives do not matter—just that, historically and in current times, it seems that black lives are more disposable than others, and thus, “Black Lives Matter, TOO” (Kimberley, 2014).

The pushback on the College Bound Brotherhood program is similar to the backlash against the Black Lives matter movement. Minority Threat theory can help us understand why a focus on African American boys feels like a threat to the dominant culture. As an illustration, all students need to be prepared for college. However, currently our African American males represent the group with the fewest number being accepted into 4-year-colleges and low graduation rates—they are more likely to put on the “school to prison pipeline” than to enter and graduate college. As we discussed in Chapter one, black male high school dropouts are more likely to have interactions with police, which then means they transition into adulthood with difficulties resulting from their contact with police and the criminal justice system (Binette, 2014). Keeping students in school and insuring their graduation, interrupts their criminalization. This critical issue underlies the urgency that motivates College Bound Brotherhood. Returning to minority threat theory, we can theorize that the criminalization of African American males in school may be the result of their perceived threat to larger society, which in turn causes school employees to enact controlling and exclusionary measures against them. Conversely, any
program that “singles out” Black students, even with research-based goals, is seen as problematic because it is not offered to all students.

**Parent Voice and Engagement**

When we honor and validate families, they will be more willing to engage in the school community (Amaro-Jiménez & Semingson, 2011). College Bound Brotherhood does so in multiple ways. One of the requirements for the College Bound Brotherhood is that a responsible adult attend meetings and events with the students—physical presence is required from parents or other responsible adult (although exceptions are made if there is no parent present to participate). Parents of College Bound Brotherhood students are also encouraged to attend LCAP, board meetings, and any other Hayward Unified School District forums of discussion. They take part in discussions about the policies and practices in the district and taught that their knowledge is valued and needed in Hayward. We must create environments that engage the community and are warm and inviting, remembering that many adults in urban settings did not have positive experiences in the school setting (Murray, et al, 2014). Engaging families and keeping them informed about requirement for graduation and entry into college helps to ensure academic success, interrupting criminalization.

College Bound Brotherhood’s engagement and valuing of parent input differs from literature on other school programs. Parent voices are often unheard and or misunderstood through school initiatives like the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), and miscommunications between parents and staff occur frequently (Reynolds, 2009). Parents must be encouraged to be informed, show up for events, sign up (for governing bodies), question, critique, confront, challenge, and create advocacy groups, as voices of these parents, in both the collective and individual sense, are missing from the conversations
in schools (Reynolds, 2009). In this current study, parents who are not often heard were repeatedly informed of the need for their voices. They attended meetings with other parents that looked like them and shared similar backgrounds and experiences. As a result, they felt safe to share their thoughts and felt empowered to speak on behalf of their sons.

Like the parents studied by Reynolds (2009), where many of the single parents often with two jobs and spoke with felt unheard by schools and intimidated, the parent felt unheard in other program. Due to the cultural norm of not “being in someone else’s business,” speaking out in large meetings is often not a possibility. Therefore, Fremon and Hamilton (1997) have suggested that parents create smaller informal subgroups, and accompany this effort with more outreach to urban families and communities. In the current study, because parents share similar cultural norms with each other, the College Bound Brotherhood meeting was a family setting where they discussed needs of students without the feeling of having outsiders hear “family business.”

Finally, the College Bound Brotherhood program honored the funds of knowledge (González, Andrade, Civil, & Moll, 2001) of the parents it served. Funds of knowledge are the information, strategies, and resources that families and the community possess and could contribute to school communities if they were valued and mobilized. Examples of funds of knowledge that parents can contribute include what motivates their students, how they learn best, what they are most influenced by, and the skills they possess that could lead to their further engagement in school. Gonzlez et al. (2001), in their research around funds of knowledge, found that there are “hidden” sources of knowledge and resource in minority communities (in other words, knowledge that people outside their homes and cultures would not have access to) that goes unutilized because schools do not actively investigate what kinds of knowledge and resources are available in the local community. One reason these resources go untapped is because many educators work
from the “deficit model” – that is, they believe that the school is the main source of all knowledge and thus communities of color do not have anything to contribute.

Funds of knowledge are can be accessed and available to educators when social networks of exchange are formed (González et al., 2001). I argue that the College Bound Brotherhood is one such social network of exchange. It has become a place where parents of African American boys can interface and share common concerns and knowledge, and are comfortable doing so because they know these types of resources are valued there. This exchange is critical, because parents have insider information regarding what their children need and how to best reach them. Further, when positive models in place and when educators listen to the needs of families and make education relevant, families are more likely to implement what is shared with them by educators (Amaro-Jiménez & Semingson, 2011). Thus, educators must identify the funds of knowledge in households, be reflective about how funds of knowledge can be used, and forge linkages between school curriculum and student and parent funds of knowledge (Amaro-Jiménez & Semingson, 2011). Using the insider knowledge that families have regarding the learning styles and needs of their sons supports academic excellence and improved graduation rates, and therefore has the potential to interrupt cycles of criminalization faced by Black boys in schools and society.

**Building a College Going Culture for African American Males**

There are many elements to college going culture. Students need to have core academics with lead to college readiness, self-management skills and academic behaviors (Reid, 2008). They also need to make applying college a priority, align assessments and grading closer to college expectations progressively until senior year, and partner with institutions of higher learning (Conley, 2010). They also note that students should all be expected to attend and be successful in post-secondary education. This is one of the goals
of Hayward Unified School District: building a college culture requires that schools, families, and communities need to give students the same message that there are high expectations for their futures (Reid, 2008). In the College Bound Brotherhood program, students are taught the “Made in Hayward” pledge in all schools at all grade levels, which mentions that the students are college bound. Repeating this pledge over and over contributes to a college going culture because we create our reality through language. “With language we categorized, distinguish and create the universe” (Lefkoe, 2014). That is, the more you say something, the more you begin to believe it.

Other than the College Bound Brotherhood, there are currently two other college preparation programs in Hayward Unified School District, AVID and Puente, both of which have been operating in Hayward for years. However, these two programs have not been as effective due to perceived cultural and parental disconnects. For example, although Puente is not just for Latino students, many students believe that it is because at present, most students in that program mirror that demographic. I am not stating that Puente is not effective, however, African Americans do not usually enroll because of the perception that it is intended for Latino students. AVID is another program that many students in Hayward are enrolled in, but there is little connection to families with this program. Because of this lack of parent connection, my interview data shows that this program was not as effective for some parents (discussed in Chapter 4, in the section on “Parent Engagement”).

College Bound Hayward has been an avenue for students and families that did not feel connected to the other two optional programs. As one part of that larger program, College Bound Brotherhood has been a tremendous resource for African American boys and their families who were previously not represented in a college preparatory program. In order to create a culture of going to college, parents needed to be informed about how to get their sons into and through colleges. Many parents, per the boys in focus groups
had not gone to college and needed support in this area. Some ways that the program helped in this area were teaching parents about a variety of ways into four-year colleges and ways to fund them. For example, they are told about scholarships, the NCAA Clearinghouse, junior colleges and trade schools as options to support their future goals.

Creating Meaningful Relationships with Teachers and Students

Relationships developed with teachers are important in student decisions to attend college (Reid, 2008). Any successful site level program, including College Bound Brotherhood, could benefit from teacher support and input. In the current study, the lack of teacher connection seemed to be to be a big area of need since the weakest link in the “relationships” theme section was between teachers and students. Teacher-student connections create a transformative space in which students are affirmed, gain insight into their potential, and grow toward fulfilling personal and professional capacities (Gillespie, 2005). Moreover, educators have a better chance of making connections to students if they also connect with the students’ families, who are the child’s first teachers and therefore a major influence on the child. Parents and teachers need to be partners (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997).

Teachers must also receive consistent training in cultural, class, gender, and language issues to interrupt their notion of the ideal student as one with the behavior, cognitive, and language norms of white females:

“If the White female is the ideal student, then many African American males—those who cannot be quiet or sit still for long periods of time, have short attention span, cannot work independently of neatly on ditto sheets, are not organized, do not speak standard English, and prefer right-brain lesson plans—are in serious trouble.” (Kunjufu, 2005, p. 29)
Teachers will best develop critical thinking skills in their students when they admit the limits of their own knowledge. In my study, students felt that teachers were not connected to them and that teachers treated them in ways that did not make them feel that they care about them. In addition, they stated that when teachers did not treat them with respect they lacked respect for teachers in return. Students said that lack of caring and respect ultimately affected them academically as well. Some of these issues may be due to cultural mismatch, which “is characterized as a situation where a student’s home culture is in contrast with the dominant culture of the classroom” (New Jersey Educational Association, n.d). Some sources of student failure encompassed language interaction patterns between students and their teachers. Some terms that are used to discuss the opposite of this and thus away to stop these disconnects and mismatch are “cultural appropriate, culturally congruent, and culturally compatible” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 467). The idea is that we need to accommodate the students’ culture into the mainstream culture which can begin bridging the home school gap (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

…some White teachers work from within a hegemonic, Western, epistemological framework, which often predisposed them to have lower expectations of Black students and a lack of respect for the students’ families and primary culture. Therefore, the possibility of effective teaching by these teachers is greatly reduced. (Douglas, Lewis, Douglas, Scott, & Garrison-Wade, 2008, p. 49)

The teaching demographics for Hayward High School are as follows (email communication, D. Seymour): 17% African American students and 15% African American teachers. This is different from state and national teaching staff demographics, which are far less diverse. In particular, Hayward High school has a much more diverse teaching staff than other school with regard to African Americans which is of most
concern in this study. Regarding Latino representation, the cultural gap is high, with 60% Latino students compared to only 19% Latino teachers. Most concerning, with only 8% white students, there are 63% white teachers. Thus, there is a clear cultural mismatch on the school site. Teachers of color provide a number of benefits to students of color: they are role models, share cultural backgrounds and experiences, can make connections between home and school experiences, and have interaction patterns commonly found in the African American church (Villegas et al., 2012). They also have more credibility with students because they have personal insight around ethnic inequalities that students face. With 63% white teachers, 68% teachers of color, and 92% students of color, these needs are not being filled by the current teaching staff at Hayward High School.

As the culture of the children and teachers affect student engagement and learning (Lewis, 2009), we should be trying to recruit and retain a diverse teaching staff. Often even when teachers think they have cultural competency students do not experience this in the classroom (Riley, 2013). If this is the case, how do we get teachers to subscribe to professional development around cultural competency if they do not believe they lack this competency? How do we make this actually happen where it actually reaches students? With the pace of growth of students of color and the pace of diversification of the teaching force, it is important to strategize how to retain teachers of color. The recent national decrease of African American teacher availability promises to make it even more difficult to close the cultural gap between teachers and our African American boys (Villegas et al., 2012).

Cultural mismatch may help explain why there also exists a lack of connectedness that was illustrated in interview and focus group data. Only two students shared any positive interactions that they encountered with teachers. In fact, the student I interviewed in-depth, Jimmy, could only recount one teacher that he felt connected to in his high school experience—he named a teacher from three years ago—and this was from one of
the more successful students in the program. If he is disconnected to most of the teaching staff, what does it say for students who are not academically successful?

**Recommendations**

While the College Bound Brotherhood was a funded program, there are some ways that the experiences without that funding when funding ends at the end of the year. In the following section I offer suggestions to Hayward Unified School District, school, teachers, and other districts. The following are suggestions around building community with families, providing mentorship, and creating college going cultures within schools and districts.

**Hayward Unified School District, Schools, and Teachers**

**Hayward Unified School District.** While we know that funding for the college Bound Brotherhood will sunset and the end of the 2015-2016 school year, there are some steps that Hayward Unified School District can take to maintain some of them benefits of the program. Some of these steps include parent and guardian meetings for the parents and guardians of African American boys, make College Bound Brotherhood activities a part of school activities, build on the African American Student Achievement Initiative, and share more information with parents and students about initiatives and their benefits. I suggest that HUSD maintain monthly village meetings, or provide a similar forum, because parents enjoy being with other parents of African American boys and becoming more informed about school and how to get into college. The meetings, as I argued earlier, are one way to continue to tap into funds of knowledge that only our families and community can provide to the schools and the district. The meetings will also continue to
provide forums of discussion among parents of African American boys as well disperse information and resources to them.

The second recommendation is that College Bound Brotherhood become a part of the school day. AVID and Puente are currently implemented during the regular school day as elective classes that students take. This could be done with College Bound Brotherhood if there was enough interest with the African American boys on campus. This way, College Bound Brotherhood could be another option for students and families that do not feel that Puente and AVID are the best option for them. In addition, if there is a loss of funding for the program, I would suggest that the district work to at least support staff taking students on college tours to local schools where Hayward Unified staff members have connections and can introduce students to personnel or students with similar cultures and experiences as students. This would provide more access to students who work or do not have transportation to and from weekend activities and it would illustrate a commitment to African American students, particularly males.

As a third recommendation, HUSD should continue and build on AASAI and connect it to this program as funding is discontinues. Staffing should be provided through AASAI in order to maintain case management and monthly meetings. This may be necessary because without funding, village meetings may be eliminated or limited. Perhaps an offshoot of AASAI might be created that focuses on African American boys. This may provide a forum to connect boys to natural community mentors and continue to provide safe places to share experiences of being African American, Black history moments, and famous speeches with time to share reactions. In addition, this program could continue to further build confidence and self-esteem for our African American males.

Finally, there should more messaging to students around the importance of the program, the components of the program, and the benefits of the program. Based on focus
groups, students were provided more information if they were enrolled in the program, and had minimal programmatic information if they were not. Many of the focus group students believed that if students understood this information about the program, they might be more likely to get involved. Some focus group students felt that there was a need for safe spaces for them during lunches and other breaks in the school day that would provide an arena to share information with other students. They also suggested meeting during those times of day where students could get together and talk, or that students could get the message about the brotherhood through PA system announcements, networking, small fun events, and though social media. Since students know best how students communicate, I would suggest that these methods be used.

The following are suggestions that I offer to Hayward Unified School district to maintain and build upon the experiences that have positively affected the boys of the College Bound Brotherhood. The experiences that must be built upon are the case management/mentor relationships that have been build, the sense of community and a safe space for African American families to speak freely and obtain vital information to the needs of their sons as they move toward college, and their needs to be transparency about programs targeting boys of color so that staff, students and communities can benefit and support such programs. These types of suggestions although targeted at a small program in one district could have validity and transfer in some ways to any district working to repair the damage done to African American boys by the systemic oppression placed on them by the American educational system.

I would recommend that districts recruit additional mentors because mentorship has been shown to keep them in school and improve college graduation rates, reduce the likelihood of African male students dropping out or being pushed out. Since it is uncertain if funding for mentors will continue, natural volunteer mentorship may be one way to continuously connect these boys to African American mentors because
students and families find mentorship extremely helpful in keeping students successful academically. In addition, schools should make sure to connect students with staff and community members with similar backgrounds, cultures and interests, since Grimes (2014) found that cultural differences, collectivism and cultural mistrust can cause mistrust and likely hinder connectedness. In any district, it would be beneficial to continue to seek out these mentors to support African American boys. However, there may be a lack of these male figures in Hayward without funding that has maintained them throughout the program, so it will be important to seek these people and recruit them fervently.

When there is not funding, as there usually, isn’t working with community and partners and across schools. It would be advantageous for districts to find people and resources already in their district and connections that they have made with supportive community groups as College Bound Brotherhood has done. In addition, staff, parents, and students should attend Town hall meetings and board meetings around LCAP funding and advocate for the needs of their students, in this case African American boys. Parents and communities need to be continuously made knowledgeable as to how districts are funding programs and how those programs align to the needs of students in those districts. Family funds of knowledge must continue to be valued, honored and built upon because families are the experts on the need and understandings of their students and communities.

With one of the goals of Hayward Unified School district with a mission to promote 21st century learning and college and career readiness, one of the pieces that is missing in the College Bound Brotherhood is STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) learning. One of the students in the study had previously worked with STEM STEPS (Strategies to empower and prepare students for success) for Success through AAREA (African American Regional Educational Alliances) a program designed
to support African American students through stem education. They have a focus on this marketable area of knowledge and learning.

**Schools in HUSD.** Hayward Schools can support their African American boys to become College ready, and empower parents. One important recommendation is to create a digital interface for data sharing that is informative up to date and user friendly for parents. The school or district must put checks and balances into place to ensure that teachers are uploading information that students and families need into “infinite campus” interface so that they are informed about how their students are progressing in each class. There should be a timely manner in which teachers enter data into the interfaces that they use to inform parents of assessment data, attendance, and important assignments that students are expected to complete. Parents should also be informed of which classes students have taken to meet their A to G requirements, their progress toward graduation, and more importantly, their 4-year college readiness. Parents desire to support their students, but they must be given the resource to do so. The deficit model allows educators to forget that consistently. School counselors should be disseminating information around college bound programs and about colleges, how to apply, scholarships and financial aid (Reid, 2008). This was being done by the College Bound Program.

**Hayward teachers.** Teachers are the number one determinant of student success. Accordingly, we must invest resources and training to produce mind and practice shifts. Specifically, teachers need to learn to develop deeper connections with students and families, learn about programs and initiative that can support their students, and be prepared to teach culturally responsive curriculum using strategies that work for students of color. As I stated in the discussion, teacher connections are pertinent to the decision for students to attend college (Reid, 2008). My first recommendation for teachers is that they connect with students and families more deeply. Teachers have a better chance of making connections to students if they also connect with the students’ families who are a major
influence on the child. Parents and teachers need to be partners and there needs to be more outreach to urban families and communities, because often school personnel have low expectations of urban families (Fremon & Hamilton, 1997). High expectations of all students are needed in college going cultures (Reid, 2008).

Second, teachers must become aware of programs and initiatives available that can benefit their diverse students. In particular, there needs to be more cooperation between Teachers and College Bound Brotherhood staff. There should be more messaging around what the program is how it works and who is eligible to be in the program, so that teachers can have more input into students who may need the program. With this input requested there may be more buy-in from teachers and they may support the program with less hesitation.

Finally, the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy could be achieved through creation of Curriculum for College Bound Brotherhood during the day. A precedent already exists for this, as AVID and Puente have curricula that is implemented during the day to support students on their path to college. If curricula were created that teachers would share and deliver to students that was culturally relevant to the unique needs of African American boys, it would support students and possibly lessen the disconnect. This curriculum should be a scaffold so that teachers can reach the various needs of their students, allowing it to be culturally responsive to a variety of students because even children within the same community and race differ in needs and experience. As Gay (2000) notes, “Teaching is a contextual and situational process. As such, it is most effective when ecological factors such as prior experiences, community settings, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities of teachers and students, are included in its implementation” (p. 21). Teachers need to hold high expectations of their students. There is a gap between high school experiences and those in college. Teachers need to close that gap by aligning expectations more closely to the expectations in college
classes, this can be done by partnering with colleges and universities in the community (Conley, 2007).

**All Districts**

Principals can take steps to create a College-Going Culture school by having personnel and community leaders actively engage in making sure that students are prepared to plan their futures academically, socially, and emotionally (Aviles, 2011). Students also need environments that reinforce the importance of education post-secondary careers. They need to build the capacity of community, students, and families to be empowered and proactive about how to get into college and how to be successful there. In addition, students must be taught that they are capable of being successful academically in college by building confidence, and eliminated pre-conceived notions about who belongs in college and who will be successful. They need to build caring relationships between students and staff and expect students to meet high expectations and rigor. Time needs to be allocated to share information about college and scholarship. There needs to be an environment where parents and students are encouraged to ask for help when they face challenges and there should be a counseling program that understands student fund of knowledge to influence instruction.

In addition, the school should establish partnerships with local colleges that can provide information and resources to students and families (Aviles, 2011). This is something that Hayward Unified School district through a program called middle college that is currently happening at the middle school level. Middle schoolers are currently obtaining college credit through the district’s connection to Chabot College. These types of connections and partner ships can support this work in the district.
Every district can benefit from putting initiatives in place to support African American boys on their trajectory to college and career and interrupt criminalization of these scholars. I suggest restorative discipline practices, professional development for staff on cultural competence and responsiveness, mentorship, the use of funds of knowledge, partnerships with local community members and colleges, the creation of safe places for both African American boys and their parents to have real conversation and share experiences, and a focus on STEM learning to prepare them to the 21st century workforce.

Restorative practices—instead of exclusionary ones—would support teachers and students with any issues regarding cultural mismatch and discipline. In order to reduce disciplinary sanctions and dropout rates in African American boys, we need to engage them in academics and in the school culture and community. This could be done by using strategies like Positive Behavior Interventions and Strategies (PBIS) and Restorative Justice to use positive, and not punitive, strategies to effect behavior.

Professional Development for teachers should be provided around relationship building and cultural responsiveness/competency to support teachers beginning to minimize the disconnect between teachers and students and further teacher understand of African American boys. In Culturally Relevant classrooms, the teacher shows a connectedness with all students, encourages a “community of learners”, and encourages students to learn collaboratively. In these settings students are responsible for each other. By contrast, in assimilationist classroom the teacher student relationship is hierarchical and fixed; the teacher has connectedness with individuals, encourages competitiveness, and isolated learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). If teachers were prepared to connect with their students through culturally relevant pedagogy, many students would feel heard cared for and a sense of trust in the people attempting to educate them. In a related sense, tapping into funds of knowledge of our communities and families is arguably important in all educational
settings. In addition, it is infinitely important to create multiple ways for teachers and
student to share information to support student learning, academics and college preparation.

    Earlier in this chapter, I noted the importance of natural mentors and a request
that mentors are recruited. These individuals will also be able to support the college
going culture, leading by examples and connection boys to their circles of influence. The
mentors that the boys have met they goals that they wish to attain, are readily accessible
to them, and advocate for them with the teachers to whom they may not be meaningfully
connected. Additionally, these mentors share personal stories with them about their
roads to academic success: from college adventures to strategies for academic success.
In addition, the meaningful relationships that they have created with the mentors over
time have built a sense of trust between the boys and the mentors. All districts and
academic settings should be working to provide safe spaces for students of color to
ensure empowerment of students to take control of their academic career and to provide
awareness of what it takes to prepare for and attend four year universities.

    Research Recommendations:

    Finally, I have identified areas for future research. Although I did not have time in
the scope of this study to find out what is happening with the students that are not joining
the College Bound Brotherhood, it would be interesting to be sure of what hindered
students from becoming involved in a program that supports their academic careers and
college readiness. I also would like to ask them their perceptions of interactions with
school staff and how that may have or have not affected their decision not to enroll in
the College Bound Brotherhood. This information may lead to an understanding of why
some students tease College Bound Brotherhood enrollees. I would also like to explore
with students the labeling that is taking place between College Bound Brotherhood and
non-College Bound Brotherhood students, because there seems to be a disconnect and a lack of understanding between these groups, and further study might promote relationship healing between them. Further, this idea might lend itself to a youth participatory action research project for these students to begin.

Without resources to provide monthly parent meetings, the district may need to create ways to continue a forum like the College Bound Brotherhood village meeting. I would also like to investigate why parents might choose not to send their students to College Bound Brotherhood. It would be interesting to understand their perceived needs for student achievement and their ideas and academics and college for their student and open this conversation. I would also like to know about ways to extend the engagement of parents to other programs in Hayward.

Because College Bound Brotherhood is connected to College Bound Hayward, it would be interesting to compare and contrast the effectiveness of the two programs as the brotherhood specifically works with African American boys. This investigation would illuminate whether the separation of this group makes a difference in the academic outcome. This information would in turn help provide a rationale for this separation.

The only data collected around how students are treated by teachers is focus group data. I would like to have had time to probe further into what the boys perceive as unfair or disrespectful treatment. In future research one might probe deeper to define these interactions more deeply and observe them. However, the fact that students feel a shift in the way that they are seem, or labeled is an important finding to be looked at more intently in the future.

Therefore, I would like to see deeper questioning for students about what they mean by “not treated well.” and observation data about student-staff interactions that takes place in classroom and across the campus and in multiple settings. Seeing what is actually happening in classroom may be enlightening. While we heard from one
student, one teacher, one parent, and one case manager about what is happening with College Bound Brotherhood on campus, observing actual interactions may give a deeper knowledge of what is happening for the boys in terms of treatment by staff.

**Conclusion**

This study has added to the knowledge by illustrated the benefits of programs like College Bound Brotherhood that build relationships, empower parents, and build a culture of college among a demographic that had been overlook and even invisible in programs that promote college going cultures. It shows that a program focused on African American boys can change the narrative for these boys, and shift their perceptions of themselves to become confident leaders. It can build the knowledge that parents have of schools and the requirements for college acceptance and success, and moves the boys towards academic excellence. All of these have the potential to put students on a path to college, thus interrupting patterns of criminalization for African American boys in the US school system.

Even with all the odds stacked against the program, it still benefitted students. Students have been teased by their peers, the program has been looked down upon by some community members because of its focus on African American boys (and a perceived threat around that), and the program has not been validated like Puente and AVID, which are already in place but have not become a home for African American boys. Yet, even with all these obstacles, students still have developed an enhanced sense of self, built community, and formed relationships with each other. The College Bound Brotherhood has set students on a path towards college and careers, interrupting the negative labeling and self-fulfilling prophesies that play into cycles of criminalization. They now see themselves as having futures that are unlimited, contradicting other studies
where subjects only saw their future selves in careers that did not involve schooling (Ferguson, 2010).

I found out while writing this chapter that the funding for the College Bound Brotherhood will sunset at the end of this school year. My concern is that non-College Bound Brotherhood students may find themselves thinking like Ferguson’s (2010) students—not knowing of or believing in their own potential. And without the benefits of the College Bound Brotherhood in place, how will Hayward High School continue a culture where African American boys see themselves attending and finishing college to achieve their career goals?

College Bound Brotherhood was funded by a grant that ends this school year. College Bound Brotherhood has created a sense of family and shared community. It has become a safe place for African American boys and their families: a safe haven where their concerns and learning are heard and valued. If funding for these types of programs ends, it important to determine additional capacity building for parent and community groups to address this need. For example, in Hayward there is a group that addresses some of the needs of parents of African American students: African American Student Achievement Initiative. There is a need to then fortify this group and empower parents there, and explore other ways to ensure that the lessons learned from College Bound Brotherhood, and its potential for interrupting the system-wide criminalization of Black boys, are not lost.

**Personal Reflection**

As a principal and as a mother it saddens me that this program may be ending because it will no longer be funded. I am highly disappointed that my son will not have the opportunity to benefit from this program that he and I were both looking forward
to—a program that has already changed his perspective on his life and its possibility. I am hoping that some of the positive attributes of this program can be replicated through different services, but in actuality I do not see how they can. It concerns me that a program that even our superintendent supports is still ending and that the focus on African American boys that we know is important is not going to be funded and thus, even if we implement the above suggestions, it will still lack the cohesion that the College Bound Brotherhood provided.
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