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Wakanda College Retention Program: Developing Black and Brown Young Men

William A. McHenry
DePaul University

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CAPSTONE PROJECT

WAKANDA COLLEGE RETENTION PROGRAM: DEVELOPING BLACK AND BROWN YOUNG MEN

**WILLIAM
MCHENRY**

DePaul University
College of Education

A Capstone in Education
with a Concentration in
Curriculum and Instruction

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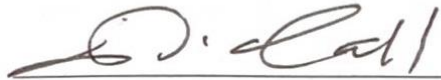
Capstone Project

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I approve the capstone of William McHenry.



5-30-2020

Horace Hall, Ph.D.

Date

Associate Professor

DePaul University

Capstone Advisor

Capstone Project

Wakanda College Retention Program: Developing Black and Brown Young Men

Certification of Authorship

I certify that I am the sole author of this capstone. Any assistance received in the preparation of this capstone has been acknowledged and disclosed within it. Any sources utilized, including the use of data, ideas and words, those quoted directly or paraphrased, have been cited. I certify that I have prepared this capstone according program guidelines as directed.

Author Signature: William Archie McHenry

Date: 05/28/2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Currently, urban education is filled with great disparities related to issues of equity and access to a quality education for African American and Mexican American male students in secondary education settings. These groups are plagued with negative stereotypical images and subjected to the belief that they are inherently inferior to White students and incapable of academic and social success. Their social capital, which stems from their racial diversity, is not celebrated on any level in any educational space.

Research for this study will show how the Wakanda College Retention program (WCR) has successfully addressed this disparity by employing the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework in its dissemination of services offered to its African American and Mexican American male student body. The goal of WCR is to ensure not only that its male student body is academically prepared for college but also that throughout their tenure in the program, students develop a keen awareness and appreciation for their respective communities. The goal of this research is to supply counter-narratives that challenge the linear perspectives held by White-dominant culture of African American and Mexican American male students that disempower who they are.

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MY POSITIONALITY

It is important to delineate my biases and what specific thinking I bring to this research. I am a socially conscious, Black, male educator who is extremely proud of his culture. I was raised in an all-Black, middle-class environment on Chicago's South Side. I grew up in a Christian household and attended an all-boys Catholic high school that was predominantly Black, where I was told repeatedly that I was a leader. Although I did not excel academically in this environment, my love for Black culture was deepened through my Black male instructors and track coach. They introduced Black literature to me and set social standards for me inside and outside of the classroom. The expectation was that my classmates and I were going to college, and we were known by our school mascot, a Monarch, which we translated to mean kings and leaders. We greeted each other by saying: "Was up, monarch?"

After high school, I matriculated to Alabama State University (ASU), a historically Black college, where I thrived and excelled academically. The environment at ASU was one where I was surrounded by Black male educators and mentors who offered academic and social guidance. My undergraduate years were filled with classes and social events that highlighted the diversity and excellence of Black culture. I experienced this at ASU via BlackGreek step shows, plays performed by students, and roundtable discussions on race and education both inside and outside of the classroom, just to name a few.

My schooling was reflective of the imaginary world of Wakanda in the 2018 Avengers movie *Black Panther*. This movie focused on an African country whose people had created and maintained a separate culture and domain, where African people surpassed the Eurocentric-dominated world. My schooling was a real-life Wakanda in that I saw successful Black people on a daily basis and never thought of myself as socially challenged, inferior, or less than. Specifically, my socialization in Wakanda insulated me from the dominant Eurocentric spaces that limited my emotional and social growth related to my ethnicity. I was not affected by the White colonization of the school systems and the world. I learned to think of and love my Black culture with every piece of my mind, body, and soul. When I think about this time of my life, I am reminded of Zora Neale Hurston's (1928) essay, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me." Just like Zora, I could not even fathom loathing or being insecure about the use of my Black colloquial language amongst my people. I love hearing soul music, which celebrates love with all imaginable Black cultural nuances, and seeing bright colors and fashions that show the unique style of Black men and women, declaring our beauty. I never doubted that my ancestry was filled with anything other than Black excellence and strength.

As a secondary English instructor in WCR, my high school and undergraduate years have had a profound effect on how I have taught and interacted with my male student body. I believe and teach incessantly to my African American and Mexican American students that their racial pride should be organic in that they should love and appreciate their exceptional history. I remind my

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students of their ancestral history via the literature I use in my classes, which stems from a wonderful place.

As a researcher, it is critical that I use counter narratives of people of color to combat the master scripts historically perpetuated in school systems. The empowerment and transformation of my students' minds is directly connected to my use of the literature and culturally competent pedagogy. I am also keenly aware of my interaction with my students as they look to me for guidance, empowerment, and understanding of who they are as young men of color. Not only do I act as a mentor to the young men of this program, but also I require that they perform with academic excellence in my classroom and know that their future is filled with great expectations. I set clear expectations for them and inform them that as men of color, they have a responsibility to lead and uplift their respective communities. I give directions through my dissection of the racism and racist practices in U.S. educational systems. I facilitate this process by using literature that questions the status quo and its skewed sense of reality. Although the program's goals are closely tied to race formation and students' understanding their own identity, a small number of students reject the notion that their ethnicity is a variable in how they navigate and understand their past, present, and future educational practices. They have been victims of a mindset perpetuated by conservatives that says educators are colorblind and do not see race and class.

As a teacher using critical race tenets, I am methodical about teaching my students to understand and deconstruct the notion of color blindness and how its reference is racist. The need for any educator to erase the uniqueness, complexity, and infinite beauty of African Americans and Mexican Americans is absurd. Critical Race Theory is useful and needed to unpack the whitewashing of schools and attempts to disempower my students of color.

INTRODUCTION

As a 20-year veteran English teacher in the Chicago Public School system, I am perplexed by many of my African American and Mexican American male students' behaviors, which reflect a mindset that obtaining a college degree and achieving academic success means divorcing themselves from their ethnic origins and adopting White constructs and social mores. They believe that their matriculation through school has been void of any race or racist practices.

The aim of this research is to show the academic community that using CRT as a framework for urban school systems' curriculum is crucial for students comprehending how to navigate through high school and college schooling experiences. Another goal of this research is to show through my evaluation of WCR how the awareness and application of CRT is vital in preparing African American and Mexican American students for college life.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions will be answered:

1. How has the use of CRT in servicing African American and Mexican American students in the WCR program benefited them in becoming socially conscious and academically ready for college entry?
2. How does the recognition, understanding, and application of Critical Race Theory by all stakeholders (parents, teachers, community-based organizations, etc.) in the WCR program prepare students to become leaders and change agents in their respective communities?

HISTORY OF THE WAKANDA PROJECT

The framing of the conversation about African American and Mexican American males' struggle to receive a high-quality education can be uncovered and highlighted by Ralph Ellison's (1952) central character in *The Invisible Man*. He stated:

When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me. Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of biochemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. (Ellison, 1952, p. 3)

This language frames the refusal of the White-dominant power structure to see Black and Brown students as complex people with complicated needs. Their needs require that the world and educational systems understand and view them as complex human beings. The metaphorical

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invisibility that is placed upon them is a real struggle that impairs the pursuit of educational equity and empowerment of who they are. The invisibility voids their ethnic origins and culture in a blatant refusal to see them as they truly are.

Gay (1994) stated that educational equality in the United States is popularly understood to mean the physical access of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans to the same schools and instructional programs as middle-class European American students. Historically this goal has not been attained by students of color; they do not gain access to the same quality of schooling as their White counterparts.

Most elementary and secondary schools in the United States have continued to be racially segregated (Orfield & Eaton, 2013). These demographic divisions have some profound implications for providing ethnically diverse students with equal access to high-quality educational opportunities and outcomes. Schools that are populated by students of color are not providing them with a quality education, typically because of a lack of resources.

Luis Rodriguez (1993) framed the theoretical battle that is happening in schools: Lines have been drawn between the idealized, superficial, and insular-minded ways of looking at the world. These ideologies present themselves in the school setting as teachers and administrators who refuse to acknowledge or cannot see the White power dynamic that works against Black and Brown students. White middle-class idealism fails to recognize the nuances of its Black and Brown students. Rodriguez stated that language, behavior, ideas, ways of expression, and authentic imaginations have been censored. Our humanity is sacrificed little by little. His comments are a response to urban school systems that have traditionally silenced Black and Brown students; their stories and experiences are not recognized.

The WCR program was created in 2010 by Green Money, which is a pseudonym for a multinational/global banking system, as part of its Global Outreach Program. A multiyear program, WCR is developed to expand opportunities for African American and Mexican American young men. Its mission is to help them acquire the skills, knowledge, experience, networks, and other resources they need to succeed academically and professionally. Students apply to the program when they are in the 9th grade; programming begins the summer before their sophomore year and extends through the summer before they enter college. Fellows also receive support through college. A first cohort of 24 fellows from New York City graduated from high school and entered college in 2013. Based on this experience and lessons learned, WCR expanded its programming in 2014 to serve 120 fellows across Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONTEXT

U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson enacted a series of legislation that benefited disadvantaged students. Under this legislation, several programs were created nationally that addressed the needs of students of color from poverty-stricken backgrounds. The Upward Bound program was created under the authority of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, then amended in 1965 as part of the Higher Education Act to include Talent Search, which assisted students in applying for federal financial aid for post-secondary education (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The Higher Education Act of 1965 was again amended in 1968 to create the Student Support Services program, which provides grants to higher education institutions to support students in reaching graduation (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Today, these three programs, Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services, are part of TRIO, a set of what is now eight different programs administered by the U.S. Department Education to serve disadvantaged postsecondary students (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Johnson's legislation was among the first to address the lack of access and resources for students of color.

This disparity has continued, and it can be seen in national educational outcomes, particularly for Latinx and Black students' college preparation. Historically, African American and Latinx secondary students have had some challenges with college readiness. According to a 2014 American College Testing (ACT) report, "Condition of College and Career Readiness 2014," 49% of White students met three or more college readiness benchmarks as compared to 11% of Black students and 23% of Hispanic/Latino students. Only 45% of Black men enrolled in a four-year college completed their degree.

According to Scott, Allen, and Lewis (2014),

Recent reports regarding academic performance ratings and overall academic outcomes for urban, African American males have led to calls for educational reform initiatives that not only challenge traditional structures of education but also mandate that policymakers, administrators, and educators craft new models to support success (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Goodman & Hilton, 2010; Lewis, Butler, Bonner, & Joubert, 2010; Sax, 2005). According to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (2011), African American males constitute only 18% of the nation's total student population enrolled in public schools. However, this population remains ostracized for low achievement, behavioral problems, and overall lack of motivation towards educational goal attainment (Dillon, 2010; Goodman & Hilton, 2010; Hamilton, 1986). (p. 1)

The aforementioned ideas start the conversation about why the WCR program is needed. The data shows that African American and Mexican American male students are not performing at high

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levels and need support to move them in the direction of achieving academic success and gaining entry into college.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

The following definition and description of CRT is crucial in describing how it will be used in this capstone project and through the literature review. De La Garza and Ono (2016) stated:

Critical race theory (CRT) is an intellectual movement that seeks to understand how white supremacy as a legal, cultural, and political condition is reproduced and maintained, primarily in the US context. While CRT is part of a much longer research tradition investigating race and racism, which includes such key figures as W.E.B. Du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and many more, CRT distinguishes itself as an approach that originated within legal studies (in part building from and responding to critical legal studies); aims to be a vehicle for social and political change; has been adopted interdisciplinarily across many fields, including perhaps most notably education; and, in certain contexts, has come to be the umbrella term for studies of race and racism generally. (p. 2)

This definition frames my approach in understanding how students have been affected by White supremacy, specifically how the WCR program has given my students the tools to overcome White supremacy. My use of CRT in this study will focus on how the WCR program is using this thinking to recognize that White supremacy exists and its effects on the young men it serves. I am concerned not only about the use of CRT but also whether it has changed how students understand the effects of racism on their daily lives. Critical Race Theory will be used to assess the social competency of teachers, curriculum, and inclusivity of students' voices and ethnic identities inside and outside of WCR.

According to De La Garza and Ono (2016), the tenets of CRT are as follows:

1. The first tenet of CRT may seem an obvious one, but is nevertheless central to the critical and scholarly project of CRT: Race still matters (Orbe & Allen, 2008). Viewing race as a central component of scholarship is one of the primary hallmarks of CRT work.
2. The second tenet of CRT is the centrality of narrative and storytelling as a method of analysis. CRT critiques law and legal studies for not having incorporated people of color into scholarship, as well as for not having changed, structurally, to adapt to perspectives and theories emerging as a result of changes such scholarship requires.
3. The third tenet of CRT entails a critique of liberalism. Additionally, liberalism is associated not with progressivism, but with incrementalism. Hence, CRT aims for more radical institutional changes than reformist ones.

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4. The fourth tenet of CRT is a commitment to social justice. Early CRT work began as a critique of the legal institution and juridical modes of thought. CRT scholarship is often referred to as a political and intellectual movement; as such, many CRT theorists position themselves in opposition to dominant ideological and discursive frames.
5. A fifth tenet of CRT research is an acknowledgment of the importance of interdisciplinary approaches CRT scholars recognize that there is a historical relationship between the production of scholarly research and the maintenance of white supremacy. (pp. 3-4)

The following is a list and synopsis of my rationale for using specific CRT tenets:

- *Counter-narratives*: Give students of color the opportunity to discuss their marginalized experiences. My research will highlight students' voices and their opinions using their own language. The narrative destroys the master scripts and reflects the language and ideas of my students of color. in the WCR program.
- *The permanence of racism*: Acknowledges that racism is an inherent part of civilization and that White ideologies are supported over any substantive inclusion of diversity, namely stories and perspectives of people of color. The WCR program acknowledges that racism exists and teaches the African American and Mexican American male students to navigate the racist urban school systems that they come from .My students are taught the complexity of racism and how it will not be presented in a simplistic manner. They are taught and given the tools via my classroom instruction and additional services offered to them via our partnerships and stakeholders. Students' cultures, voices and cultures are fully integrated into the curriculum we teach andthe partnerships that are formed.
- *Critique of liberalism*: The tenet of colorblindness that says that the law and equality exist for all. It allows for racist practices and policies to exist and flourish. The concept of liberalism is a dangerous concept that the WCR programs do not endorse. The program was founded on the premise that the complexity , beauty and ethnic origins of our African American and Mexican American students is an asset and not something that should be ignored. The WCR program understands the concept of colorblindness is filled with racist ideologies that attempt to not engage students' lived realities and how they are marginalized in this country.

My use of the aforementioned tenets will allow me to show the complexity of racism as presented to students in the WCR program. Critical Race Theory allows me the ability to unpack the experiences and the services offered to the students to understand how they experience racism and how the program assists them in overcoming it. As an educator, the use of CRT is critical in my interaction with students and for me to support their celebration of their culture and their lived realities.

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Knaus (2006) stated in his discussion of CRT that educators must remember how students live before, during, and after school. To fail to consider students' personal context is to ensure that what we teach is irrelevant to their daily survival. Indeed, I argue that in a democratic society, educators have no greater task than to equip youth for speaking the realities they see so that we can then begin to address, with youth, these realities.

For far too many times, the realities of urban life are represented by media stereotypes, not by the voices of those living in such conditions. Students from the WCR program are not monolithic in nature and filled with stereotypes. The young men's lives are diverse, complicated, and include cultural norms that must be understood in educating them.

The use of CRT allows for the realities of student voices to be heard and the stereotypical, uncomplicated voices to be diminished. This thinking is crucial in facilitating Black and Brown students' use of counter-narratives to disrupt the White, middle-class perception of schooling that does not include Black and Brown realities.

The realities Black and Brown students face includes their encounter with racism, which is often times trivialized and not recognized in its cloaked presentation. Racism has been reduced to broad generalizations about another group based on the color of their skin. It has become an individual construct as opposed to a social and/or civilization construct (Scheurich & Young, 1997; Young & Laible, 2000).

This thinking is problematic because it limits educators' and stakeholders' understanding of the complexity of racism and its effects on students of color. The WCR program understands that students' lives are not trivial and unimportant but must be fully embraced. Racism is present when the dominant and master scripts minimize the racist ideologies students have to combat and rewrite for themselves. The application of CRT realizes that racism is inherent in school systems and present despite it not being shown in a simplistic manner. In the WCR program, students are prepared to understand how racism is presented in multiple ways and taught how to unpack it and its effects on them.

Not only has racism been reduced to skin color but also the belief that using rhetorical soundbites, like "I am colorblind," mitigates or ends systemic racial prejudices that have disserved students of color. This belief that colorblindness will eliminate racism is not merely short sighted—it reinforces the notion that racism is a personal rather than systemic issue.

The use of CRT is crucial here in unmasking the racism-filled notion that educators or stakeholders are colorblind. Critical Race Theory unmasks the vantage point that racism disappears if stakeholders do not acknowledge the existence of it with students of color. Racism is systematic and institutional rather than merely some blatant verbal ignorance spoken by an individual person. The WCR program is fully aware of the African American and Mexican American ethnicity of its students and embraces their culture. The staff is comprised of both

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African American and Mexican American staff only. Both the math and English curriculum are taught from a social justice perspective that is inclusive of students' history and social justice issues that are relevant to students' lived realities.

By ignoring this broader sociological web of power in which racism functions, individuals can readily equate White racism with Black nationalism. This slippage only serves to protect the idea of a neutral social order by moving the focus away from barriers and inequalities that exist in society and refocusing on ignorant individuals (Lopez, 2003).

Critical Race Theory is a tool that allows educators to uncover and unpack the nuances of racism and how it is perpetuated through a thought process. Lopez's (2003) ideas not only uncover an ignorant thought process that is grounded in racism but also are useful in educating students of color. Students in the WCR program are able to articulate their understanding of how their perceived nationalism is equated with racism and is filled with lies that perpetuate an uniformed perspective of the inequalities faced in this country by people of color.

As Parker and Shapiro (1992) stated,

We cannot adequately prepare future leaders to achieve these goals if we avoid exposing them to issues of race, racism, and racial politics and demonstrate to them how these issues still permeate the educational landscape. An intimate understanding of the racialized nature of schooling is vital to assist students of color in progressing through school. School leaders' mantra must include services that address the perpetual fight against racist practices. Rarely is racism seen as something that is present in society and in our daily lives. (p. 71)

What is interesting and also alarming is that when racism is presented in an unconventional manner, some educators and stakeholders believe that it does not exist. When racism becomes invisible, stakeholders begin to think that is merely a thing of the past and/or only connected to the specific act. Critical Race Theory also allows all stakeholders to understand that racism is always present despite its presentation; furthermore, educational leaders and teachers learn to understand the complexity of racism.

Taken holistically, these statements mean that we need to develop antiracist educators who recognize the reproductive functions of schooling and have the courage to envision different possibilities for it—particularly for most marginalized youth and communities (Parker & Shapiro, 1992).

The mindset here is that there needs to be a mental shift and a proactive approach in preparing educators for school systems that are populated by marginalized youth. The call to action is that educators should employ a mindset that is courageous enough to change the narratives and trajectory of marginalized youth. This socially conscious educator tries to disrupt the White power

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structures that dominate school systems. Critical Race Theory is present in that the behavior listed above will help create counter narratives that are needed for Black and Brown male students to tell their own stories. Counter narratives are not just relevant—they also unmask the racist systems that limit the possibilities for Black and Brown students. In the WCR program, students are prompted to share their counter narratives in group meetings in Social Circles every Saturday morning and during direct instruction in their math and English classes.

The narratives and stories of students of color should reflect their lived realities, not that of the dominant White class. The second reason for the voice of CRT is the potential of story to change mindset (Delgado, 1989). To the oppressor, most oppression does not seem oppressive (Lawrence, 1987). The dominant group of society justifies its position with stock stories (Delgado, 1989, 1990; Williams, 1989), which construct realities in ways that legitimize power and position. However, stories by people of color can counter the oppressor's stories (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015).

Educators can use this tenet of CRT to provide students of color the opportunity to share what they have lived and experienced in their own language and voice. It is problematic to believe that the education of students does not allow their experiences and voices to be heard. In the WCR program, students are being taught how the stories traditionally told are used to diminish their existence; however, they are given tools that help them deconstruct the dominant group's ideas and distorted mindset.

One of the challenges to students of color's stories being told is the belief that master narratives are the template primarily used to show their realities. Master narratives are dominant accounts that are often generally accepted as universal truths about particular groups (e.g., Blacks are hopeless and helpless); such scripts usually caricature these groups in negative ways (Harper, 2009).

Harper (2009) stated:

We are not developing imaginary characters who engage in fictional scenarios. Instead, the “composite” characters we develop are grounded in real-life experiences and empirical data. Hence, data collected from persons of color are juxtaposed with research published about them by others to identify contradistinction and offer insights into overlooked experiential realities. (pp. 701-702)

This thinking and mode of operation understands the rich and complex lives of students of color. With the use of CRT, the diverse uniqueness, beauty, and strength of African American and Mexican American culture is brought to the forefront with the use of counter narratives. Critical Race Theory recognizes that racism is present when African American and Mexican American life is told as fictional and imaginary. Their lives are not imaginary but real, filled with bountiful

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experiences that are not contrived from a master script. The WCR program uses CRT and is keenly aware of the danger of showing students' lives as caricatures.

Ledesma and Calderon offered additional substantive vantage points in this discourse involving critical educators: "Yet, it is not enough to include Student of Color voices; without critical educators, such works does little to critically engage White supremacist ideology prevalent across pedagogy" (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015, p. 208). Thus, not only is it important for CRT to situate the subjectivities of students' lives, but it is also equally important for teachers to engage in such meaning-making. Both student and teacher counter-narratives are contextualized within particular experiences that critically examine what it means to bring non-dominant voices into classrooms, an essential component of CRT (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015).

Critical educators are another part of the educational process of students of color. Like the WCR program, educators have to be able to enlist the use of CRT when educating students. Educators must be able to identify and teach students to unpack the racist practices and ideologies that permeate the educational system; furthermore, they must help students use their counter-narratives to empower them in a world that seeks to limit their voices. The classroom should become a training ground for excavation of ideas and concepts historically perpetrated by White supremacist ideologies. This style of pedagogy is crucial for students of color.

According to Ledesma and Calderon (2015),

The current trend in CRT in education research related to pedagogy demonstrates that CRT scholars are building, engaging, and enacting Critical Race pedagogical practices that if used appropriately have the potential to empower students of color while dismantling notions of colorblindness, meritocracy, deficit thinking, linguisticism, and other forms of subordination (Assimeng-Boahene, 2010; Chapman, 2007; Kohli, 2012; Kohli & Solorzano, 2012). (p. 208)

This thinking and use of CRT pedagogy is essential in creating a space and tools for students of color to thrive. Students and teachers are able to engage in meaningful dialogue that helps both parties understand the realities they stem from. Specifically, students of color realities are being told, and the conversation that is created should facilitate an understanding of who they are. The use of CRT here by educators destroys ideas and concepts that limit students' voice and their lived realities. The racist belief that colorblindness is an option when engaging students of color is dismantled. The students' counter narratives are critical in students feeling empowered and heard by all persons involved in the students' educational process.

According to Ledesma and Calderon (2015), "Many scholars examining curriculum using a CRT lens demonstrate how curriculum is influenced by White supremacy (color blindness, meritocracy, integrationism, post racialism, etc.) and offer practical means to reconstruct curriculum in liberatory ways" (p. 210). The use of CRT understands that White supremacy exists

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and uses curriculum to liberate students of color from oppressive White supremacist ideologies. The WCR program curriculum and use of it methodically reconstructs the realities of students of color and dismantles the White supremacist narrative. The curriculum is a vehicle by which students become empowered and deeply understand who they are as people of color.

RACE

As mentioned in my introduction, Black male students utilize images from Eurocentric, male-dominated U.S. society that portray Black men as the other. Ferguson (2001) framed this discourse when she stated that two cultural images stigmatize Black males as criminal and endangered species. This framing has a negative effect on how Black boys identify and see themselves. Continuing her discussion of Black male misbehavior, Ferguson explained how White teachers view and respond to minor infractions: Black male behavior is constructed as ominous and criminal. These perceptions are also thought of as immoral. There has to be a space created by educators and all stakeholders that does not demonize adolescent behavior as immoral. Furthermore, Black boys must see themselves as powerful rather than as criminals or endangered species. There is power in Black boys seeing images of themselves on a daily basis that are not marginalized but powerful.

Ferguson's (2001) dissection of the perception of school boys as troublemakers gives credence to the belief that secondary school systems perpetuate a need for African American boys to separate themselves from their ethnicity:

All of those interviewed were physically identifiable as African Americans though the wide differences in skin color and hair type manifested the rich diversity of people who identified as African American and/or Black. However, the school boys had a strong tendency to identify themselves as biracial or distance themselves from race as a meaningful social decisions. (p. 211)

Boys are being trained to think that the association with their African American ancestry is somehow degrading and does not put them in a favorable light amongst educators. This thinking represents the presence of racism, which has infiltrated the thinking of African American boys and how they see their own culture. Critical Race Theory identifies that school systems are filled with racist ideologies that make them unwilling to identify themselves as African American but willing to associate themselves with White constructs that dilute their ethnicity. In the WCR program, we are keenly aware of students' ethnicities and educate them weekly about the richness and beauty of their African and Latin heritage. We never frame their identities from a deficit model.

Ogbu and Simons's (1998) use of the term "involuntary minority" is useful when talking about Black children and families' understanding of schools and their place in them:

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Involuntary minorities are less sure that education leads to success or helps to overcome barriers to upward mobility. Their individual and concrete experiences with job and other economic discrimination contradict the abstract belief and serve to reinforce that education and hard work will not necessarily lead to economic success. (p. 172)

Their use of the phrase “involuntary minority” speaks to an understanding of America’s racist history and diminishing of African American and Mexican American culture. Ogbu and Simons’s ideology, which is used by the WCR program, is realistic about how students understand their ancestors and how they have been positioned in America historically. My students generally have an understanding of their position in America and intimately understand that even though they may work hard and pursue a college degree, they will be seen as other and less than the dominant White middle-class person. Critical Race Theory equips students with the tools to navigate the racism and practices that make this a reality for them. It also allows them the space to understand that racism is present in the educational and economic system and helps them navigate through it.

The low level of academic success for African American students, especially males, has been a concern as the number of minority children in school have increased and their academic performance has decreased (Edwards & McMillon, 2000). The school is considered the place African American males develop their identity. Black males develop an identity of who they are, what they do, and how they are perceived by others. These identities are shaped by their experiences with the church, family, community, media, and school (Davis, 2003).

What is problematic in this area is that African American students are being taught to devalue themselves and thinking about who they are in school. Their worth as young people is tied to their low academic success in their respective schools. It seems their goals and lack of understanding of their identity and potential for greatness is not nurtured in the school. The school does not reflect the safe spaces that support their identity. The WCR program recognizes how spaces where students socialize impacts their perceptions of themselves and the world around them. The experiences inside schools must be ones in which students feel supported and heard. The expectations of Black male students should be high and require them to perform at high levels with a support system that does not demonize them. CRT is needed here in acknowledging that there are racist practices and systems that do not cultivate or acknowledge that racism exists in the school system. The school system is not equitable and does not address the individual needs for African American boys.

It is crucial to recognize how many African American and Mexican American youth are being trained to see themselves as subordinate to teachers. Freire (1968) offered substantive insight into how the school system is oppressive, stating,

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those they consider to know nothing. The teacher

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presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. (p. 72)

This “banking” system attempts to erase the culture, ethnicity, and experience students bring to the classroom and typically only validates White middle-class norms. Schooling becomes oppressive in that the teacher is situated as the sole source of knowledge and students cannot construct their own realities. This is problematic because it positions the student as incapable of learning and not capable of adding any knowledge to the classroom.

Critical Race Theory is needed here in that racist practices allow for the aforementioned teacher to thrive in a traditional school setting. The racist system does not allow for multiple identities to exist in the classroom; instead, the middle-class norms that are historically tied to White-dominant ideologies thrive. Students’ counter narratives are not considered in this space. African American and Mexican American students are oppressed and demonized in the way that Freire (1968) framed oppressive teacher and student interaction. The WCR program understands that the oppressive practice outlined above does not allow for the relationship between teacher and student to be one of learning and empowerment. The space created in the WCR program is one in which all stakeholders believe that students are capable of learning at high levels and possess the capacity to grow academically and socially.

Teachers often perpetuate their subjective values and ideas in their classroom. The monolithic perspectives are often not inclusive of their students of color. The goal of the pedagogy is oftentimes about teaching students to fit into some metaphorical square that does not include all students. The norms usually are presented in their pedagogy and interaction with the student, which is problematic. As Ladson-Billings (1995) stated,

Each suggests that student “success” is represented in the achievement within the current social structures extant in schools. Thus the goal of education becomes how to “fit” students constructed as “other” by virtue of their race/ethnicity, language, or social class into a hierarchical structure that is defined as *meritocracy*. (p. 467)

This thinking does not acknowledge the student and who they are; furthermore, this pedagogical practice frames education in a limited way for the student that stems from this discriminatory perception CRT is needed here to prompt educators to understand that the ethnicity of students must be included in the pedagogy of teachers. The WCR model is aware of the diversity of our African American and Mexican American student body and addresses their multiple identities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this section is to explain the study's qualitative research design and how it allows for students' voices in the WCR program to be heard. It enables the researcher to contextualize how students understand their racial identity and how it has affected their academic pursuits and their opinions of themselves. Furthermore, readers will be able to understand students' "counter narratives" about who they are and how the program has assisted them in understanding their racial identity despite limiting White constructs that have historically been perpetuated in secondary urban school systems.

A qualitative approach is being used to interpret and evaluate artifacts produced by the WCR program to determine how the use of CRT has produced changes academically and socially for the young men who have participated in this program. The qualitative design will allow the researcher to deconstruct and analyze how social factors like race, class, and perceptions of racial identity have influenced how participants understand themselves as young men.

The researcher selected four artifacts that showcase students' and stakeholders' narratives about their vantage points and experiences with the WCR program and the services provided to students. The artifacts are as follows:

Artifact 1: E and A report, which discusses an action plan in addressing social issues by students of the WCR program;

Artifact 2: Video clip of Genius Summit in which WCR participants are interviewed by the director of the program to discuss their experiences in the program and how their lives have changed since starting the program;

Artifact 3: WCR protocol/framework, which details the origins, goals, and background of the program; and

Artifact 4: Lesson plan on the novel *Invisible Man*, taught to WCR students with anecdotes that show their narratives about the lesson.

This study will be qualitative in its approach to understand how the WCR program's goals are shown in the services offered to the young men who have participated in the program.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011),

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to

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the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

As stated above, I am attempting to recreate the world as it is for African American and Mexican American male adolescents to explain how they were initially silenced and not given a voice prior to their entry into the WCR program. My use of CRT in dissecting their voices brings to life their worlds and also the world created by the WCR program for them. The qualitative approach allows me as the researcher the ability to deconstruct my students' language and ideas to construct a powerful message to the world about who they are as socially conscious and astute men of color.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) ascribed that there are five features to qualitative research:

1. The natural setting is the data source, and the research is the key data collection instrument.
2. Such a study attempts to primarily describe and the only secondarily to analyze.
3. Researchers concern themselves with the process that, with events that transpire as much as with product or outcome.
4. Data analysis emphasizes inductive methods comparable to putting together the parts of a puzzle.
5. The researchers focus essentially on what things mean, that is why events occur as what happens. (pp. 3-7)

It is important to explain how each of the four characteristics for qualitative data will be used in my research. In gathering artifacts and describing them,

1. I gathered data that had been created by the students and reflects what students actually do in the WCR program on a daily basis. I also attempted to recreate the setting that the WCR students experience in their matriculation through the program.
2. My description of the artifacts is also key in understanding how the program uses CRT in its inception of activities for students and how stakeholders interact with students.
3. I will be deliberate about dissecting the processes and protocols created by the program to understand how and why behaviors and ideas are created in the WCR program.
4. My data analysis will reveal how the program and services work together to support the growth of my male students academically and socially.

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5. This point is also essential in my research in understanding what CRT means and how the WCR program's use of it affects students' understanding of themselves academically and racially.

I will examine four artifacts that give a comprehensive perspective of the services offered to students and their alignment to the goals of the program. In reviewing the artifacts, it will be important to deconstruct and understand how CRT is manifested in each one.

The assumption held by this researcher, which is supported by research, is that African American and Mexican American male students thrive in an academic environment that supports and celebrates their racial identity. For instance, Noguera (2017) stated:

Today, even as policy makers debate immigration policy and battle one another over how to deal with the millions of undocumented people already living in the United States, public schools are denied the luxury of time to figure out how to serve the social, educational, and linguistic needs of the immigrant children. U.S. courts have consistently ruled that immigrant children, including the undocumented, have the right to a public education, and that right has been upheld even when states have attempted to deny it; in 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler v. Doe* that states cannot constitutionally deny undocumented immigrant students free public education (American Immigration Council, 2012). (para. 15)

Noguera's statements were key for me selecting artifacts that show how WCR has methodically designed its curriculum to address the cultural needs of students. The program and its stakeholders are not only aware of our immigration population but also seek to be inclusive of their racialized experiences in the curriculum and additional services offered to them.

Critical Race Theory is important here in that it recognizes that without laws and policies, the educational system is filled with inequities that do not support immigrant children in the United States. Racism is present in that their social, linguistic, and educational needs were not being met until the legal system was corrected to address them.

These statements support my research and WCR philosophy related to educating immigrant male students. Educational systems must not demonize Mexican American students and their culture; instead, educators' pedagogical approach must be responsive to who students are racially, socially, and economically.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study are that the videos only show students who were selected by the corporation that funds the WCR program. It would have been more useful to invite a variety of students from all of the cities involved in the WCR program (California, Dallas, and New York) to

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have a more comprehensive vantage point. Also, even though the researcher has been an employee of this program for over four years, there are no ethical challenges in reporting what was said by students and stakeholders of the program on publicly available YouTube videos. The researcher was not in any way connected to decisions about which students were chosen for the videos and themes discussed in them. Readers of this program evaluation can view and listen to the videos cited in this research.

DATA COLLECTION

When collecting data, the goal was to locate WCR artifacts that highlighted not only students' but also stakeholders' voices. The artifacts used allow for students to speak candidly about how the program's services have impacted their lives. They also allowed the researcher the opportunity to dissect and understand how these young men see themselves as African American and Mexican American students. Furthermore, they allowed readers of this research to understand how the program shaped participants' perspectives of themselves and education.

When gathering data, I received permission from the WCR director of the program, and he directed me to specific public websites and material that spoke of the WCR program in Chicago and other cities. However, I wanted to locate data that was primarily reflective of the cohort of students I have serviced. I looked for videos and documents that vividly tell the story of the assets and services the program offered to my students.

DATA

ARTIFACT 1: E AND A CHALLENGE REPORT

This qualitative report detailed the goals of the Social Challenge in working with the young men of WCR in creating a service project that addressed social issues they selected, which were ones in their own community. E and A is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization whose mission is to develop community leaders and engaged, informed, active citizens. E and A worked with the young men for over six months to create a plan that addressed the following social issues in their respective communities:

- food deserts,
- gun violence,
- lack of extracurricular opportunities in schools,
- lack of job opportunities for youth, and
- lack of support for undocumented students and families.

The young men developed a plan to address these issues in the following ways:

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Gun violence

Step 1: Identify 2-3 areas within a community area(s) where there are higher rates of gun violence.

Step 2: Identify people inside and outside the community who can serve as mentors to young people in the community who have been exposed to gun violence.

Mental health stigma

Step 1: Create and distribute a survey to collect information on current knowledge and perceptions of mental illness among Chicago youth.

Step 2: Host workshops to build awareness around mental illness.

Food deserts

Step 1: Host a community forum (with emphasis on community youth voices) to understand the wants and needs related to healthy food.

Step 2: Create a feasible plan to expand food pantries and/or farmers' markets that incorporates findings from the community forum.

Lack of extracurricular opportunities in schools

Step 1: Survey youth to learn about their interests and identify partners who could provide related programming.

Step 2: Host an event that all identified partners attend so students can sign up for extracurricular opportunities. Local businesses should also be involved in maintaining the sustainability of the programs.

What is interesting about this project is that it addresses social issues that currently affect the young men's own communities. For instance, food deserts have plagued many African American and Mexican American neighborhoods. Traditionally, they have faced challenges with attracting and keeping grocery stores that serve fresh fruits and vegetables in their poverty-stricken communities, which has negatively impacted residents' physical health. In addition, gun violence has plagued Chicago's South and West sides for years. The homicide rate in areas populated by African Americans and Mexican Americans has traditionally been high due to violence associated with guns.

The existence of CRT in the program is presented in tenet number three in that this report shows the centrality and lived experiences of the young men of the WCR program. The report recognizes the lived, race-based social disparities and inequities that are present in the students' lives. Their

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communities are faced with poverty and gun violence, which affects their lives day-to-day. The report refutes any utopian notion that they live in equality. The project not only recognizes that racial inequalities exist but also attempts to help students use their voices and ideas to devise and implement solutions that empower them. This project represents students' voices by using another component of CRT, counter-narratives that show their lived reality. Through them, students speak about social issues that have affected them rather than being fed rhetoric or ideas that are not relevant to their lives. The project allowed them to become leaders and address social issues that are relevant to their lived experience.

What would happen if the goal of this partnership were implemented in all secondary schools, and young men of color were given the opportunity and resources to address social inequities in their schools? Young men would not only feel heard and empowered but also see themselves as change agents instead of apathetic receivers of social inequities that they could not change. Project-based services like these are life changing because not only do students feel connected but also who they are and what they are living is validated.

ARTIFACT 2: VIDEO CLIP OF GENIUS SUMMIT

In this video, the director of the WCR program interviewed two of the program's graduates. The Genius Summit is an annual event that represents global communing of "black swans and wayward thinkers." Where most events bring together luminaries to explore the next big idea, it brings together those hungry to not just talk about the next big thing but to build on it. The conference focuses on how business innovation and social transformation collide. Zeev Kelein, founder and curator of Social Innovation, is a general partner at Landmark Ventures, an investment firm for Fortune 500 companies. The summit brings together businesses whose narrative is that they are bringing social change in socioeconomic and political climates of the world. A look at the conference's speaker list shows a diverse panel of guest speakers, corporate leaders, and social justice leaders, including Jackie Parker, president of General Motors; Vann Jones, CNN contributor and president of Dream Corps; Michael Strautmanis, chief engagement officer for the Obama Foundation; Rose Kirk, president of the Verizon Foundation; and Marley Dias, social activist and founder of 1000 Black Girl Books.

At this conference, R. L., the director of WCR, interviewed two graduates from the program: Bobby A. and David Nestar. Bobby A. is a Mexican American male who is a graduate of a popular charter high school in Chicago. He attends Oberlin College on a full scholarship that includes both tuition and room and board. A Posse award winner, he grew up in Chicago's Northwest side. David Nestar is an African American male who grew up in Chicago's South side and graduated from Currie High School. He was raised in a single-parent household, and he currently attends Western University.

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This artifact is essential to this research because it shows the young men discussing their perceptions of themselves as men of color and how they understand their role in society and their own communities. The students were able to talk about the resources they received through the WCR program. They spoke of the resources that helped them evolve into responsible young men. The themes and student responses that evolved from the interview are the following:

Racial identity

Student A: “You were not dealt a good hand. You knew how to play your cards.”

Student B: “I broke down and cried. My dad was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. I broke down and cried. I did not feel. It was the first time I did not feel alone.”

Student B: “A leader leads with action.”

Student A: “Before joining WCR, I did not know what ‘a young man of color’ meant. I just lived life and not making a difference.”

Student A: “A lot of people fear young men of color with knowledge.”

Student B: “We knew about slavery, and we thought it was abolished by now. We saw things that were a head scratcher.”

Student B: “We had a home away from home.”

Understanding of my community

Student A: “I was a bit ignorant towards Africa. I thought it was going to be hot, dirty, me being ignorant. I was completely ignorant. I learned how to forgive.”

Student B: “There is a stigma... segregation creates a us-versus-them. You need to provide resources and how they can use them.”

Student A: “A lot of people judge us but do not really know us. Take a step inside in our community. Young men of color have dreams. I am not a statistic anymore.”

Student A: “Where I am from, a lot of people do not go to college.”

The above quotes, which were taken from interviews, show the young men’s perspectives on themselves as men of color who have a purpose in life and understanding of the world around them. The young men talked about how a trip they took to South Africa was life changing and made them see themselves as leaders in their community. It allowed them to rethink how they understand the concept of slavery in America and its presentation in South Africa and the United States. The young men were keenly aware of how society views them and its racist perspective.

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The leadership that the students discussed in the video has led them to understand how segregation in the City of Chicago has had an adverse effect on how their peers and families have been viewed in a stereotypical fashion. The young men challenged “outsiders” to their communities to stop judging them, take a step in their metaphorical shoes, and see them as people who have dreams and aspirations. The young men were able to discuss how the ethnic segregation of Chicago creates divisiveness that in turn creates a lack of understanding about who people are racially. The students talked about how the program gave them a keen sense of their racial identity and their purpose in their respective communities. It was refreshing to hear young men discuss their perceptions of their communities and how mainstream/White culture viewed them. They were candid and introspective about where they started at the beginning of the program and how they evolved into the people they are now.

The WCR program has had a profound effect on how the students see themselves. Their voices showed awareness of how racism has had an effect on how they understand White power structures and others’ perception of them. They have evolved into young men with a purpose that does not detach them from their communities but allows them to be leaders and spokespeople for them.

Critical Race Theory is present here in that students’ experience is presented in their counter-narrative/storytelling about who they are as men of color. The use of CRT supports them informing the masses about who they are and challenging racist notions. As D. Nestar said, he challenged them (who can be identified as the White racist-dominant culture) to step into their communities and understand who they are. He understood that there is a dominant White ideology that seeks to minimize the complexity of their ethnicity. Bobby’s understanding of the racist segregation of Chicago stems from an inequitable system that does not allow equitable distribution of wealth. Both of the young men challenged White ideologies and offered solutions to address the inequities that exist for both African American and Mexican American communities.

ARTIFACT 3: THE WCR PROTOCOL: APPLYING A POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

This artifact is relevant because it details the importance and rationale of using a positive youth development framework. Understanding this framework is key to all stakeholders in their interaction with and providing services to young men in this program. In order to explain this article and its context, it is important to define what the youth developmental framework is first:

The positive youth development framework takes into account not only youths’ personal attributes, but also the ecological context—or surrounding environments—that shapes the lives and experiences of adolescents. The theory recommends holistic approaches to promote individual growth and well-being. Humans cannot be reduced to one aspect of

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their development (e.g., intellectual, socioemotional, physical, biological, cultural). These aspects are interrelated and mutually influence every person's growth (Lerner, 2005). (Turner & McDaniel, 2016, p. 3)

The aforementioned definition aligns with not only the goals and/ or best practices but also my use of CRT in delivering instruction to my students in the WCR program. As stated, my formal and informal education has been about making connections to me culturally and making me think about who I am as Black man in this country. When viewing this artifact, my teaching philosophy was validated again. In order to make connections with students in this program in particular, I have always used text and lessons that prompt them to explore who they are. I understand that a holistic approach to their learning is crucial.

Furthermore, the use of this framework is crucial because it understands how the ecological and environment are crucial in young men's development. Specifically, the urban communities the young men come from should not be demonized but recognized and validated.

Not only does WCR validate their communities, but also it provides wraparound services like tutoring, English, and math instruction, as well as college counseling and other services that are needed to address educational and social gaps that are present. The goal of the program is to provide holistic and comprehensive services that address inequities. Lastly, this framework is methodical about celebrating racial identity when addressing students' personal attributes, which can be seen in the racial makeup of the program's staff, who are either African American or Mexican American, identify with the theoretical framework of the program, and are committed to this population.

This artifact and its use align with multiple tenets of CRT, which recognizes that White dominant ideologies attempt to limit the engagement of students' lives and their communities. The framework also creates a space within the White educational system that prompts educators to not only teach using culturally relevant pedagogy but also understand the importance of being inclusive of students' environment. In this vein, the spaces created in the school systems will allow them to construct counter-narratives that support the complexity of their racial identity. Critical Race Theory recognizes that students of color need individualized services that include their culture. Understanding how their lived experience as men of color affects how they interact and understand the educational system they are a part of is crucial to their success.

ARTIFACT 4: LESSON PLAN ON RALPH ELLISON'S THE INVISIBLE MAN

It was critical to use an actual lesson taught by me in this program to understand how students were receiving services grounded in CRT, as well as how they show their understanding of their perceptions of CRT. For this lesson, I selected *The Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison to prompt my African American and Mexican American students to think about how racism presents itself in

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multiple ways. Although the author of this novel is African American, its theme is relevant to both African American and Mexican American students. The theme of the novel is how the world and the central character's understanding of himself through his socialization within specific environments makes him invisible. The assumption made by me is that African American and Mexican American students are not seen as complex human beings with multiple realities but are made invisible in that their identity is socially constructed through racist perspectives into stereotypes. My understanding of CRT realizes that analyzing these racist perspectives is needed to unpack this behavior, which also has an effect on how students understand themselves. My students are typically not given opportunities to challenge these one-dimensional vantage points.

In an effort to teach more than just the Common Core English standards, I created a lesson that prompts students to think about who they are ethically and socially. Our class discussions were grounded in students constructing their own narratives about who they are and why they hold their beliefs, so I also deliberately selected an author and theme that reflected their lived experiences. Students gave responses like the following:

Student A: "I make myself invisible to survive."

Student B: "I do not think I ever thought about what being visible meant to share who I am."

Student C: "We all become invisible to survive."

Student A: "At my school, they want me to remain invisible all the time."

Student C: "Yes, McHenry, Ice is a reality, and some Mexicans have to stay off the radar."

Student C: "Come on, we all know that racism exists."

The responses were given throughout our lesson on *The Invisible Man*. What was interesting about this lesson and students' responses during it was that they typically understood how the concept of invisibility presents itself in their own lives. They understood that their lives were impacted by a dominant White force that took on different forms, including the government, school they attended, teachers, jobs, etc. They understood that this created disparity rather than equity for them as men of color.

Although students recognized that invisibility forces them to socialize in different ways and is filled with racist ideologies about who they are, they responded differently based on their race. Some Mexican students were aware that they were invisible to communities outside of their own, but they welcomed it. The invisibility perpetuated against them allowed some of their neighbors and relatives to remain undetected and not seen. They felt that this made invisibility needed. On the other hand, while some of the Black students were very clear about how racism was typically easy to identify, they understood how to make their true identity invisible when needed. The

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lesson also allowed me to create a space where my students felt validated and were able to think about the world around them and their place in it.

Critical Race Theory is presented here through the counter-narratives of who they are in American culture. The use of an African American author and critical pedagogy acknowledges the White dominant power structure that surrounds them in school and in America. The lesson prompted students to think and uncover racism in this county and its effects on them.

CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM ANALYSIS

The following research questions guided this study: (a) How has the use of CRT in servicing African American and Mexican American students in the WCR program benefited them in becoming socially conscious and academically ready for college entry; and (b) How does the recognition, understanding, and application of Critical Race Theory by all stakeholders (parents, teachers, community-based organizations, etc.) in the WCR program prepare students to become leaders and change agents in their respective communities? I was able to answer these questions and affirm that the WCR program supported my data analysis. What follows are conclusions drawn from my data analysis.

The WCR program has had a profound effect on students and how they understand and see themselves as men of color. Their understanding of their racial identity was made evident in their interview with the director of the program as they articulated who they were ethnically and how they understood White society and its perceptions of them. The WCR participants talked from a place of social consciousness in the video and showed their commitment to making a difference in their communities.

The use of CRT was also evident in the young men's creation of a service project where they were able to identify social issues that affected their respective communities, like gun violence and food deserts to name a few. It is clear that WCR participants have learned the tools to become change agents in their respective communities as they created an action plan to address social inequities plaguing their neighborhoods.

The WCR program further showed its effective use of CRT through my use of *The Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison. Using my instruction, students were able to express counter narratives in the classroom setting to combat the master scripts that have historically silenced the voices of marginalized groups and erased their stories. Their response to the lesson reflected students who had a sound understanding of the invisibility and racist color blindness that some educators attempt to use against them. Critical Race Theory was also present in the questioning of students by me and the director. The WCR program was founded on the belief that race is a factor and essential component to empowering the students of the WCR program.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

This study prompted me to contemplate the following research questions and opportunities for further research that I believe should be conducted as a result of my study:

1. How do Mexican American male secondary students construct their identity as young men? How have master scripts influenced their perceptions of race, racism, and success in America? How does it differ from that of African American male secondary students?

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Throughout this study, it became apparent that Mexican American male students viewed their ethnic identity differently, which was influenced by their perceptions of race and racism in this country. Research in this area should uncover how students have been socialized to understand their racial history in America and what impact their caregivers have had on how they understand their history in America.

2. Are LGBTQ male students being serviced and are their needs addressed adequately with the use of CRT? Are WCR students' counternarratives monolithic and not supported by the current goals of the WCR program? What program factors influence how African American and Mexican American LGBTQ male students reveal their identity amongst their heterosexual peers in the WCR program? This study did not probe or ask how students identified themselves related to their sexual identity. It would be useful to create some mechanism that allowed students to be deliberate about self-identifying themselves and their understanding of their pronouns or sexual identity. Does the WCR program support students who identify with the LGBTQ community, and is this support different from that of the male heterosexual students?
3. What are the variables and training that allow White educators to recognize their privilege and how it impacts them in educating African American and Mexican American male students? Is the application and use of CRT in their school communities enough to allow African American and Mexican American students the opportunity to grow academically and socially? Research in this area would seek to understand how the dominant, middle-class norms of White teachers are navigated by them when teaching African American and Mexican American students. What does the training and professional development look like to ensure that their lived realities are celebrated and used in their school communities to promote their academic and social growth?
4. Is there a need for a female WCR program that addresses issues of equity for African American and Mexican American females? If so, how would the topic of gender be addressed while still validating the culture of Mexican American students? Throughout this research, I was made keenly aware of the racial disparities against African American and Mexican American male students. However, there is also a body of research that discusses the patriarchal values that are systemic in African American and Mexican American cultures. Future research should investigate how adolescent African American and Mexican American female students are supported to grow academically and socially. Are there cultural barriers that impede their academic growth?

BEST PRACTICES

The following are best practices that I believe should be used by schools and any learning setting when serving African American and Mexican American students:

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1. The curriculum taught must be grounded in the celebration of students' culture, i.e., ethnicity, class, etc., and be aligned to state and federal educational standards. Students should identify and see themselves in what they are being taught. The curriculum should show the complexity of their identities and culture. It cannot simply show White, middle-class norms and make their communities and ideas invisible.
2. Stakeholders must become intimately aware of the communities in which they are teaching or providing services. What this means is that professional developments in schools should be required to learn more about their students' communities. This can be done by planning events that support academic and social growth with specific neighborhood agencies. This action plan should have specific time frames and expectations for all stakeholders
3. Caregivers should be engaged in the education of their child, and support systems should be provided to caregivers, i.e., transportation, mental health services, educational support, etc., to ensure academic and social growth of the family. Practitioners can also simply be deliberate about talking to parents consistently about the progress of their child.
4. Students should be met where they are while belief that they are capable of academic and social growth is fostered. Students in urban school systems often come from areas where they are below grade level. As an educator, the goal should be about starting from there and methodically working with all stakeholders to help them grow. Educators must believe that this is possible with support and must work with all stakeholders to ensure success.
5. Create a plan with students that validates where they are currently and where you want to take them. The plan must be created with the student and must be reviewed on a weekly basis with the student.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The WCR program and its mission is needed in every city and state in this country. The disparities that African American and Mexican American males face in secondary settings is alarming. The White constructs of these young men do not allow them access to a quality education because the framework used limits them psychologically, academically, and socially. Urban school systems must create spaces that support, validate, and empower male students of color and show them how education can be empowering. The goal should not be one in which students' complex racial identity is not a key factor in how they are educated and celebrated.

African American and Mexican American male students have complex needs just like their White counterparts and should not be demonized because of it. Race has and will continue to be an integral part of their educational journey. Color blindness and other racist practices must be addressed. Teachers need substantive training in providing instruction and understanding their

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own biases and how it may impact their students. The challenges faced by African American and Mexican American students stem from systemic racist practices that must be destroyed and new ones created that are inclusive of students' complex identity.

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APPENDIX A: THE WCR PROTOCOL: APPLYING A POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

September 2016

The Wakanda College Retention (WCR) program is a multiyear program developed by Green Backs to expand opportunities for African American, Latino, and other young men of color. WCR's mission is to help young men acquire the skills, knowledge, experience, networks, and other resources they need to succeed academically and professionally. Students apply when they are in the 9th grade; programming begins the summer before their sophomore year and extends through the summer before they enter college. WCR fellows also receive support throughout college.

This brief summarizes WCR's theoretical underpinnings, the activities and supports it provides, and how it compares with other programs and initiatives aimed at helping young people access and succeed in college. WCR's design and approach reflect the principles of positive youth development, applying these principles to the particular challenges and barriers facing young men of color. During each WCR program year, a team of staff, mentors, and partners delivers a diverse array of out-of-school activities and supports (including academic enrichment and skill development, college guidance and preparation, and professional and leadership development) all explicitly aimed at helping fellows complete high school, persist in college, and succeed in their subsequent careers.

Many other programs and initiatives share WCR's goal of helping students successfully complete high school and gain admission to college, equipped with the skills and capacities they need to succeed in college. However, few appear to offer the breadth and depth of activities and supports that WCR delivers over three years, and few explicitly target young men of color.

The WCR experience highlights the need to learn more about how best to improve high school and college outcomes for young men of color, including what program elements participants consider most valuable and why, how to effectively measure both short- and long-term developmental gains, and which program components have the greatest impact, alone or in combination.

The Urban Institute's Collaboration with Green Backs

The Urban Institute is collaborating with Green Backs over five years to inform and assess Green Backs' philanthropic investments in key initiatives. One of these is the Wakanda College Retention (WCR) program, a multiyear program developed to help young men of color acquire the skills, knowledge, experience, networks, and other resources they need to succeed academically and professionally. The goals of our collaboration include using data and evidence

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to inform Green Backs’s philanthropic investments, assessing whether its programs are achieving desired outcomes, and informing the larger fields of policy, philanthropy, and practice. This brief provides a foundational description of the WCR program model, including its theoretical underpinnings and activities, in the context of the broader field, while highlighting opportunities to learn more from WCR and other programs about how best to improve outcomes for young men of color.

Background and Purpose of the Wakanda College Retention Program

Our nation needs a diverse workforce that includes people from all parts of society. But today, a major obstacle to expanding the pool of future professionals is that the United States loses many people of great potential before they even make it out of high school. For complex and deep-rooted structural reasons, young men of color consistently confront difficult odds of achieving positive life outcomes— especially if they are from low-income neighborhoods.

The environments in which children grow up profoundly shape their socioemotional health and development and set the stage for future success. Developmental psychology has long noted the importance of different levels of environmental influence on child and adolescent growth, levels that prominently include (1) prevailing mainstream sociocultural contexts, which shape how groups of people are perceived and treated; (2) institutions and systems, which frame their opportunity set; (3) community and neighborhood environments, which shape their daily lives and interactions; and (4) family settings, which should confer security, stability, and general well-being. These environments create nested ecological spheres, each one uniquely influencing a child’s development, as well as interacting with each other to compound or mitigate their impacts.¹

Boys and young men of color often grapple with significant threats or challenges in each of these spheres.² While the transition through high school to college can be difficult for anyone, boys and young men of color growing up in the United States must confront negative societal perceptions, disparate treatment within systems and institutions, and sometimes damaging neighborhood environments and family instability. They carry a particularly heavy load as they navigate the road to adulthood—a road on which their sense of self is still nascent and key decisionmaking skills are not yet fully formed.

To address this challenge, Green Backs in 2010 developed a program targeted to young men of color as they prepare to enter 10th grade—a critical point when many young people fall off track. As part of a portfolio of initiatives focusing on creating economic opportunity, Green Backs’s Global Philanthropy assembled a team to lead and manage this program and drew on internal resources to deliver services and activities aimed at helping fellows navigate high school and enter and persist in college, increasing their prospects for completing college and entering the professional workforce.

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A first cohort of 24 WCR fellows from New York City graduated from high school and entered college in 2013. Based on this experience and lessons learned, Green Backs expanded the program in 2014 to serve 120 fellows across Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City.

A Program Model Informed by Research

Before designing WCR, Green Backs leadership reviewed the literature on education and youth well-being and engaged with scholars to craft a multifaceted program that could address potential areas of disconnection for young men of color from marginalized neighborhoods. The new program would rely primarily on the principles developed by positive youth development, which has emerged as the dominant frame in adolescent science over the past few decades.

Previous approaches in adolescent science focused on young people as delinquent or deficient and requiring management or correction. They emphasized the qualities young people *lacked* compared to what was expected of adult behavior. In contrast, positive youth development theory understands adolescence as a distinct developmental phase where boundary testing and individual identity development are crucial steps on the path to adulthood, steps that need to be supported by patient and caring adults. Positive youth development views adolescents as malleable people who need to be nurtured and cultivated in safe environments in order to reach their full potential.

The old paradigm reinforced the existing negative narrative around young men of color and led to the creation of programs focused on fixing problem behaviors and “problem children” as opposed to providing the supports and resources necessary for healthy adolescent progress. In contrast, the positive youth development paradigm aligns with WCR’s goal of seeding transformative change in the life trajectories of its fellows, building on their assets and contributing to their socioemotional health as a necessary foundation for enriching their academic exposure and eventual career success.

The Positive Youth Development Framework

The positive youth development framework takes into account not only youths’ personal attributes, but also the ecological context—or surrounding environments—that shapes the lives and experiences of adolescents. The theory recommends holistic approaches to promote individual growth and well-being. Humans cannot be reduced to one aspect of their development (e.g., intellectual, socioemotional, physical, biological, cultural). These aspects are *interrelated* and mutually influence every person’s growth (Lerner 2005). For example, conventional educational institutions often pay inadequate attention to the socioemotional health of students—especially young men of color from marginalized neighborhoods. In fact, because of the prevailing negative societal narrative, their socioemotional health is often under assault by people’s perceptions of them as a group.

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The positive youth development theory also maintains that an individual's life trajectory is not fixed; it can change at any point. Indeed, the adaptive nature—or **plasticity**—of human development is a fundamental strength. Adolescence is a time of dramatic brain development and emotional growth; it creates incredible possibilities for transformation. On the downside, if adolescents are not stimulated, these changes can take a negative turn. The framework also emphasizes that positive human development can take place across **multiple contexts**, such as family, school, and community. Positive change can be promoted in many different environments among people in those settings (Benson et al. 2006; Lerner 2005).

These three principles provide a basis for how to support healthy emotional growth (or developmental assets) and suggest the optimal learning approaches and supportive environments to promote this growth. Interventions that apply positive youth development principles are often community-based and designed for preteens to young teenagers (Roth et al. 1998). These programs typically target youth who are at risk of experiencing difficult transitions into adulthood (because of poverty, personal challenges, or other risks). There is broad agreement around the “big three” features of optimal youth development programs: (1) they provide positive and sustained adult-youth relationships for at least one year, (2) they include skill-building activities, and (3) they offer opportunities to apply these skills when participating in and leading community-based activities (Benson et al. 2006; Lerner 2005). Researchers find evidence that positive youth development programs can improve socioemotional health, decreasing behaviors like aggression. However, evidence is not yet available regarding gains in outcomes such as educational attainment or employment.

Framework Goals: Promote Key Developmental Assets

According to positive youth development theory, several key developmental assets promote healthy emotional well-being in adolescents. While these different assets are often closely related, they support separate aspects of individual well-being. Together, they address and support the whole person's needs physically, personally, and socially.

The research field is divided about the number of developmental assets. The Search Institute identifies 40 and groups them into four categories of internal assets (commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity) and four categories of external assets (support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time). A sufficient number of these assets must be in play for healthy development of skills and knowledge. When enough assets are in play, an individual can be considered thriving.

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FIGURE 1: Internal and External Developmental Assets for Adolescents

Commitment to learning - Positive values - Social competencies - Positive identity

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| ■ Achievement motivation | ■ Resistance skills |
| ■ School engagement | ■ Peaceful conflict resolution |
| ■ Homework | ■ Personal power |
| ■ Bonding at school | ■ Personal power |
| ■ Reading for pleasure | ■ Personal power |
| ■ Caring | ■ Self-esteem |
| ■ Equality and social justice | ■ Self-esteem |
| ■ Integrity | ■ Self-esteem |
| ■ Honesty | ■ Sense of purpose |
| ■ Responsibility | ■ Sense of purpose |
| ■ Restraint | ■ Sense of purpose |
| ■ Planning and decisionmaking | ■ Positive view of personal future |
| ■ Planning and decisionmaking | ■ Positive view of personal future |
| ■ Planning and decisionmaking | ■ Positive view of personal future |
| ■ Interpersonal competence | ■ Positive view of personal future |
| ■ Interpersonal competence | ■ Positive view of personal future |
| ■ Interpersonal competence | ■ Positive view of personal future |
| ■ Interpersonal competence | ■ Positive cultural identity ^a |
| ■ Cultural competence | ■ Positive cultural identity ^a |
| ■ Cultural competence | ■ Positive cultural identity ^a |
| ■ Resistance skills | ■ Positive cultural identity ^a |

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- Positive cultural identity ^a
- External asset
- Support Empowerment
- Boundaries and expectations
- Constructive use of time
- Family support
- Positive family communication
- Other adult relationships
- Caring neighborhood
- Caring school climate
- Parent involvement in schooling
- Community values youth
- Youth as resources
- Service to others
- Safety
- Family boundaries
- Family boundaries
- School boundaries
- School boundaries
- Neighborhood boundaries
- Neighborhood boundaries
- Neighborhood boundaries
- Adult role models
- Adult role models
- Positive peer influence
- Positive peer influence
- High expectations
- Creative activities
- Creative activities
- Creative activities
- Youth programs
- Youth programs
- Youth programs
- Religious community
- Religious community
- Religious community
- Time at home
- Time at home
- Time at home

Source: Chart based on Search Institute developmental assets.

^a Positive cultural identity is an additional asset developed with community input for the Silicon Valley YMCA. We think it is also appropriate in the WCR context.

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These assets are not easily measured, but they are generally understood to undergird healthy adolescent development. Whether the accumulation of assets from whatever source (family, school, and community) contributes to the best outcomes, or whether specific developmental assets are particularly helpful in certain community contexts, is an open question. Research generally finds that more is better (Benson et al. 2006).

More concretely, students are considered thriving when they have achieved the five Cs: competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. Together, these qualities indicate self-esteem and academic achievement. These attributes precede college and career success and are arguably more important than other early indicators like high school grades or PSAT scores (Lerner 2005).

Pedagogical Approach: Experiential Learning

New understanding of adolescent brain science has influenced WCR's approach to academic enrichment and skills enhancement. An emerging and growing body of research has revealed that because of the adolescent brain's continued plasticity, the teen years are a period of dramatic brain development. This also involves the development of new elastic neural systems that make the adolescent brain highly sensitive to experiences. These physical changes provide an extraordinarily important window for enduring learning and knowledge building (Steinberg 2014). While this malleability may result in less-developed impulse control and decisionmaking skills (Giedd 2009; Reyna and Farley 2006), it also provides an exceptional opportunity to shape adolescents with positive stimuli that will become "hard-wired" in future years (Steinberg 2014).

Because of its heightened capacity to change, the brain is receptive to positive influences that can promote growth (Crone and Dahl 2012). To capitalize on this tremendous potential, education and enrichment programs can develop program components that align with the key motivators of adolescent behavior.

Novelty and challenge are particularly stimulating for adolescents. Project-based and experiential learning can address the need to express creativity and demonstrate competence. Out-of-school time can be particularly useful for creating tailored experiences to supplement more formalized classroom learning. These supplemental opportunities have the flexibility to employ program designs and curricula that focus on providing stimulating learning approaches that emphasize building noncognitive skills and contribute to personal growth.

Adolescents thrive with activities and experiences that capture their attention and imaginations as well as stimulate their creativity, intellect, and autonomy. This combination allows students to develop advanced thinking, better self-regulation and healthy identity development.

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Students are also helped to persist through challenges when they understand that intelligence and talent are not fixed—and can be developed through perseverance and hard work (Dweck 2006). When students learn that struggle is a necessary part of growth, they build stronger affinity for learning and gain confidence in their own ability to persist through mistakes.

Providing Supportive Environmental Contexts

By working across multiple disciplines, programs can understand what needs to be marshaled across different settings—in homes, classrooms, and community-based programs—in order to foster positive youth development and help adolescents negotiate across their various worlds (Lerner 2005). “Adults, peers, families, and the social context of institutions all facilitate development by providing opportunities and supports through which youth can work to accomplish the two essential and deeply intertwined tasks of adolescence - identity formation and the development of mastery, or the building of competencies that help them meet their needs successfully” (Lynch and Mahler 2014, 5; also see Pittman and Cahill 1992).

Peer influence is a particularly strong factor in adolescent development and behavior. When used positively, peer accountability can improve student outcomes. Cohort models and learning communities can help student academic performance and social development (Adams 2014; Richardson and Feldman 2014).

The programs' environmental—or ecological—assets that support positive youth development are considered to foster personal and intellectual growth (Lerner 2005, 41–43). According to the positive youth development framework, key environmental assets include the following four essentials:

- positive role models (or human resources) can naturally lend their strengths, skills, talents, and abilities to impressionable adolescents;
- physical and institutional resources that provide opportunities for learning, engaging, and modeling routines for structure can provide stability and certainty for youth;
- collective activity—or mutual engagement of community members—enhances adolescents' social capital and can mobilize the resources of the youth-focused program, the family, teachers, and others in service of the youth's development; and
- accessibility—or the ability to get to and partake in human and physical resources—provides necessary and meaningful access to adults in the setting, which must also include safety in the physical environment.

WCR Program Design and Curriculum

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No program can single-handedly address the systemic and structural forces that too often constrain the choices and derail the potential of boys and young men of color. But in all aspects of its design and implementation, WCR acknowledges and partners with the fellows, families, and mentors to help WCR fellows recognize and overcome these challenges. For example, staff members receive monthly trainings on such topics as the impact of violence and trauma, meanings of masculinity, and how to help mentors navigate class and cultural differences. WCR ensures that its staff and that of its partners reflect the racial and cultural diversity represented in each cohort of fellows. And the curriculum includes presentations and discussions among fellows to build their understanding of race, class, and gender issues and to help them develop strategies for navigating the societal, institutional, and community environments in which they live.

The key features of the WCR program and the setting in which it is delivered are intended to work together to build the developmental assets that adolescents need to achieve college readiness, access, and persistence (figure 2). WCR's core programming extends over three years, creating opportunities for fellows to develop sustained relationships with committed adults while engaging fellows' families in the program as much as possible. For example, families receive weekly e-mails from program staff, and family meetings are scheduled whenever new program events or activities are introduced to make sure families understand the plans and how they fit into the program goals.

WCR offers activities that build skills and career awareness, and it provides opportunities for the fellows to apply new skills in structured activities. The program also incorporates opportunities for the fellows to exercise leadership and emphasizes peer learning among members of each fellowship cohort. Fellows are encouraged to contribute to the program's curriculum by suggesting topics and projects— taking ownership of their own development and knowledge building. The program also places a high priority on establishing a culture of high expectations, personal responsibility, and accountability.

WCR has deliberately created a program setting with the ecological assets necessary for adolescent development. The vast majority of the program's activities takes place at the Green Backs headquarters for each site, with the expectation that consistent exposure to a world-class corporate environment functions as a point of familiarity, as well as a model for professional aspirations. This location not only serves the practical purpose of providing a safe and secure learning space, it also signals the importance Green Backs places on the WCR program and the participating fellows.

Personal Development

WCR targets young men of color who are talented and motivated but falling short of their full academic potential. Public high schools were invited to nominate students with strong potential, based on their academic performance as well as other characteristics (such as motivation, an

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interest in college, and engagement in activities). WCR staff and partners also conducted information sessions for classes of high school freshmen to encourage students to apply. A rigorous application process, including essays and in-person interviews, was then used to select a cohort of fellows in each WCR city that includes a mix of backgrounds, challenges, and accomplishments. Green Backs employees reviewed applications and interviewed candidates. Most fellows are from low or moderate-income families, most have a parent or guardian without a postsecondary degree, and most have grade-point averages of 80 or higher when they apply.³

Program Features

- Positive and sustained adult-youth relationships
- Families as partners
- Skill-building and career awareness activities
- Opportunities to use these new skills in structured activities
- Opportunities for youth leadership
- Collective activities
- Emphasis on cohort/peer learning
- Global/international learning experience

Program Goal

Promote developmental assets to support young men of color in college readiness, access, and persistence

Program Setting/Environment

- High standards/expectations/culture of responsibility and achievement
- Presence of role models
- Physical and institutional resources
- Professional environment/culture
- Accessibility

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WCR's asset-based approach emphasizes skill building, socioemotional health, and personal development in key areas that contribute to academic success including planning and goal setting, decisionmaking, collaboration, communication, self-awareness, and accountability. This is achieved through ongoing coaching from the program managers and mentors, as well as structured peer learning and supportive experiences. Every Saturday, WCR fellows start the morning in a fellowship circle, which provides a space to share highlights and challenges, and to discuss current events. In addition, fellows complete volunteer projects throughout the program such as reading to first graders and working at food banks or soup kitchens.

Mentoring plays a central role in the WCR program. A wealth of research demonstrates that positive adult influence—especially sustained, consistent mentoring—can have a strong positive effect on outcomes (Lerner 2005). Fellows are paired with Green Backs professional staff members who serve as mentors and work with fellows over their three years in the program. Mentors agree to meet with their fellows monthly and to maintain contact (either in person or virtually) every week. Forming reliable and steady relationships is crucial. Inconsistent, unpredictable, or short-term mentoring has actually been found to have a negative impact on students (Grossman and Rhodes 2002; Rhodes 2004).

WCR fellows gain responsibility and opportunities to help shape their learning experience each year. WCR often breaks each cohort of 40 into smaller teams to allow for deeper relationship building and to encourage fellows to get to know each other. These teams are rewarded for collective (not individual) performance, which helps leads to conversations about fellows' accountability to each other. During their junior year, WCR fellows lead smaller groups within the program. Team leader responsibilities include taking attendance, encouraging each other to dress professionally, and providing many other helpful nudges to other fellows (e.g., reaching out to mentors, completing assignments). During their senior year, WCR fellows select classes during the Saturday sessions, mimicking part of the college experience.

Program Implementation and Management

WCR is housed within the economic opportunity team of Green Backs's foundation. Across its three cities, WCR deploys five full-time staff and a network of consultants and other partners working part time or under contract. WCR staff are education and youth development professionals with experience in such organizations as the Harlem Children's Zone, The Posse Foundation, Sponsors for Educational Opportunity, and The After-School Corporation/Expanded. The full-time staff consists of an executive director and an associate, who provide programwide development and management, and three program managers, one in each WCR city, who plan and manage day-to-day activities with the fellows, their families, and local consultants and contractors. Program managers also coach the fellows, build relationships with each one, track progress, and provide suggestions and support for continued growth. All three program managers are men of color who themselves have achieved college and career

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success and who have extensive experience with youth development, professional development, and leadership development.

National program partners—including leading nonprofit organizations—are engaged , to serve all three cities, and locally, to provide city-specific programming. Examples include: Outward Bound, which provides outdoor learning and leadership development; All Star Code, which taught the fellows programming; Groundswell, an organization focused on the arts and social awareness; IDEO, which introduced the fellows to “design thinking;” and The Experiment in International Living, which planned their educational experiences in South Africa. Local partners include: Bottom Line, Center for College Access and Success at Northeastern Illinois University, Social Justice Learning Institute, and Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America (LEDA). Other organizations, including the National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR), Campaign for Black Male Achievement, and the Mental Health Association, play advisory and training roles nationally.

This structure enables the program to be quite nimble, identifying and implementing new or modified activities in real time as needs arise or are prioritized by the fellows or as staff identify opportunities to enhance fellows’ exposure to resources. To illustrate, one lesson learned from the pilot phase of WCR was that fellows’ socioemotional health was essential to academic achievement and persistence in college. Consequently, the staff engaged the Mental Health Association of New York to develop and conduct assessments of social-emotional needs and supports. Based on these assessments, program managers can identify and provide needed supports for individual fellows and/or family members.⁴

WCR’s core program activities fall into three broad categories: academic enrichment and skill development, college guidance and preparation, and professional and leadership development. All three core activities aim towards the concrete goals of high school completion, college attendance and completion, and—ultimately—successful entry into the professional workforce. Many WCR activities and events are intentionally designed to advance multiple objectives: academic enrichment plus college preparation, for example, or college preparation plus exposure to professional opportunities.

Over the three years, WCR fellows meet on three Saturdays each month for full-day learning sessions. During the summers they participate in extended retreats or expeditions that focus on a different theme each year. The program also provides special leadership intensives at least once a year: two- to three-day sessions that feature guest speakers and company tours. Figure 3 provides a calendar of activities offered through WCR. At the time of this writing, fellows are starting the second semester of their junior year in high school; specific activities through their senior year may still evolve.

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FIGURE 3

Calendar of WCR Activities

Academic enrichment and skill development College guidance and preparation Professional and leadership development

Sophomore year

- *Summer* Week-long orientation on a college campus, including academic enrichment, exposure to college environment, team building and leadership development activities *Fall*
- Weekly instruction in English language arts and math enrichment Small group academic support and tutoring
- Saturday “Lunch and Learn” sessions Monthly professional/career development learning sessions
- *Winter* College planning—peer coaching sessions
- Saturday “Lunch and Learn” sessions Monthly professional/career development learning sessions
- Winter Break series: visits to companies, and local leaders share career stories
- *Spring* College visits
- College fair
- Saturday “Lunch and Learn” sessions
- Monthly professional/career development learning sessions
- Spring Break series: exploring art and the creative process

Junior year

- *Summer* Two-day stay on a college campus for intensive academics
- College visits Outward Bound hiking and camping expedition
- *Fall* Weekly instruction in English language arts and math enrichment Small group academic support and tutoring
- Saturday “Lunch and Learn” sessions
- Monthly professional/career development learning sessions, including company visits
- *Winter* SAT/ACT prep Saturday “Lunch and Learn” sessions
- Monthly professional/career development learning sessions *Spring* SAT/ACT prep
- College visits College 101—preparing students and families for college
- Saturday “Lunch and Learn” sessions Monthly professional/career development learning sessions Financial capability training (budgeting, wealth management and credit)
- Academic enrichment and skill development College guidance and preparation Professional and leadership development

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Senior year

- *Summer* College application help
- Summer Leadership Academy in South Africa
- *Fall* Weekly instruction in English language arts and math enrichment
- Small group academic support and tutoring
- Advice and guidance with college essays
- Saturday “Lunch and Learn” sessions
- Monthly professional/career development learning sessions
- *Winter* College prep workshops
- Help with scholarship applications and financial aid forms
- Saturday “Lunch and Learn” sessions
- Monthly professional/career development learning sessions
- Community service activities
- Winter Break series: mentors, employees, executives as guest speakers
- *Spring* College prep workshops
- Help with scholarship applications
- Saturday “Lunch and Learn” sessions
- Monthly professional/career development learning sessions
- Spring Break series: exploring art and the creative process

After graduation

- *Summer* Planning a summer “bridge” program to support transition to college
- Outward Bound weekend leadership retreat
- Academic Enrichment and Skill Development

This component of WCR is geared to improve fellows’ academic skills and advance their critical thinking abilities in order to prepare them for success in college. The program seeks to instill in students the awareness that learning is a matter of process and effort more than natural smarts (Dweck 2006; Yeager and Dweck 2012; Yaeger and Walton 2011). WCR aims to monitor the fellows’ high school grades improvement; stay in contact with the teachers, counselors, and deans at their schools; provide ongoing tutoring (in person and online); and enhance Fellows’ writing skills.

In total, WCR provides about 30 extra days of learning time each year, including at least 75 hours of intensive academic instruction outside the fellows’ schools. At the beginning of their fellowships (immediately after their selection), the fellows complete a week-long program orientation on a college campus near their city. This orientation includes academic classes (math, English, psychology), as well as team building and leadership development activities.

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During the summers before the fellows' junior and senior years, academic intensives are incorporated in major retreats and expeditions; fellows can also receive additional individual tutoring.

Throughout each school year, fellows receive at least three hours of academic instruction each Saturday (or nine hours a month) and access to in-person tutoring during the week. Because many fellows have difficulty attending weekday tutoring sessions (owing to other obligations and travel time to the tutoring site), WCR is experimenting with offering online tutoring options and providing laptops to help fellows complete school assignments and access assistance.

College Guidance and Preparation

WCR aims to support fellows through college application and selection and to prepare them to succeed in college once they get there. The academic enrichment activities described above, including exposure to a college environment, clearly contribute to this goal. But applying to college (and obtaining needed financial aid) is daunting, particularly for young people whose families may lack experience with the process. Therefore, WCR explicitly offers a sequence of college preparatory and guidance sessions, beginning in fellows' sophomore year and extending through their graduation from high school.

WCR establishes a college-going culture from the very beginning. During the selection process, interviewers (JPMorgan employee volunteers) share the names of their colleges, and the interview rooms are named after colleges and universities in each region. Throughout the process, the fellows are referred to as the class of 2021. After WCR fellows are selected for the program, they participate in a week-long orientation on a college campus that is designed to expose them to a college experience and the wealth of resources available there. Activities include classes, group talks about current events and issues that can affect their success, team building, tours, and sports.

During their sophomore year, fellows are encouraged to begin planning for college and exploring college options, through discussion sessions and peer coaching, as well as college visits and participation in local college fairs. To illustrate, fellows visited California State University, Fresno; Drew University; New York University; Oberlin College; Ohio State University; San Diego State; Stanford; UCLA; the University of California, Berkeley; and the University of California, Davis. College visits continue during the fellows' junior year, but the focus shifts to preparation for SAT and ACT exams, as well as coaching sessions to prepare students and their families for the college experience. Beginning the summer before their senior year, fellows receive hands-on help with their college applications, including advice and guidance as they write their college essays. Fellows and their families also participate in workshops focused on paying for college. WCR is engaging leading college-access organizations to address such challenges as "under-matching," when low-income or first-generation students enroll at less-selective colleges than their academic qualifications suggest they could attend.

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Once college applications have been submitted, WCR helps students and their families complete financial aid forms and scholarship applications.

Plans are under way for “college bridge” activities for the program’s final summer that will support the fellows’ transition to college. Staff members anticipate that they will continue to engage with the fellows after they enter college to help them succeed there. The program now supports the 24 fellows who participated in the pilot program to make sure that they persist through college. The staff does so by contacting each fellow at least three times during each school year, reaching out to college administrators or professors when needed, and engaging more intensively with the few students experiencing serious setbacks. The program has also engaged Sponsors for Educational Opportunity to provide college and career coaching for the pilot participants. Sponsors for Educational Opportunity makes sure that students are carrying an appropriate course load and remain on track through graduation. Its staff members review résumés, provide professional development advice, and help with internship matches.

Professional and Leadership Development

WCR provides an array of experiential learning opportunities aimed at building fellows’ leadership skills, confidence, and social capital, as well as career-related seminars and workshops designed to introduce the fellows to professional opportunities and networks. These activities offer exposure to people, organizations, and places that broaden the fellows’ personal awareness of the world and the opportunities open to them. The goal is to make the fellows’ world a bigger place and demonstrate that they are not limited to or by their neighborhoods. Through these experiences, WCR also aims to provide fellows with opportunities to build skills, including communication skills and the ability to work in diverse teams, that will contribute to their success in college and, ultimately, at work.

Throughout the school year, the weekly Saturday sessions include professional and career development discussions, many of which are planned to address specific interests expressed by the fellows. Local program managers also organize outings during the school year. Fellows have participated in a speaker series on the banking industry, a commercial real estate workshop focused on community development, leadership workshops with politicians and community leaders, and sessions on design-thinking and innovative technology. During winter and spring breaks, fellows visit local businesses for additional exposure to professional career opportunities. WCR also uses the winter and spring breaks for volunteer and service learning activities, and for engaging workshops, such as a mural project, exploring art and the creative process, interactive game design, how to start a business in a day, and basic computer programming.

During the summer before their junior year, fellows participate in a ten-day Outward Bound excursion to focus on persistence and teamwork, build character, and contribute to each fellow’s personal competence and growth. The summer before their senior year, WCR will sponsor

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fellows on a two-week international travel and cultural exchange led by the Experiment in International Living in South Africa. The exchange will provide opportunities for exposure to people with different histories, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds. In addition, fellows will spend time at the African Leadership Academy, a boarding school for top high school talent across Africa. The fellows will work in teams with African Leadership Academy students and learn how they are pursuing their education and career goals in the face of significant challenges.

The Wakanda College Retention Program in Context

Many programs and initiatives share WCR's goal of helping students successfully complete high school and gain admission to college, equipped with the skills and capacities they need to succeed in college and ultimately enter the professional workforce (Smith, Benitez, and Carter 2012). A scan of the field indicates that many are delivered through public high schools or integrated in charter school curricula; others focus on out-of-school time, particularly the summers before and after a student's senior year of high school. These initiatives typically offer some combination of six elements: counseling, with an emphasis on the college enrollment process; academic enrichment so students have the skills necessary for college; parent involvement; enrichment activities that broaden students' awareness and understanding of available opportunities; one-on-one mentoring; and scholarships (Harvill et al. 2011). However, few initiatives appear to offer the breadth and depth of activities and supports that WCR delivers, and few target young men of color.

Many college-access initiatives operate within high schools, often public charter schools that prioritize college readiness and admission. Common activities across these in-school programs include: college awareness and counseling, tutoring and/or accelerated academic instruction, classes aimed at building students' organizational and study skills, help preparing for college entrance tests, and help with applications for financial aid and scholarships. The KIPP through College programs, which extend from middle school through college, are a particularly robust example. During middle school they offer help with high school placement and transition, financial literacy, college knowledge and career awareness, social supports, and mentoring. During high school the programs provide academic support, financial literacy, college knowledge and awareness, SAT/ACT preparation and support, college tours and applications, and college placement. After students enter college they continue to receive mentorship, college and career advising, career awareness activities, internships, and help with résumé building.

Two programs exemplify out-of-school programs aimed at college access and persistence. College Forward (<http://collegeforward.org/>) pairs near-peer coaches (recent college graduates) with high school juniors for a full year, builds trusting relationships, and provides personalized guidance and supports with college awareness, application, and selection, including essay workshops, practice college entrance tests, college visits, and parent workshops. Bottom Line (<https://www.bottomline.org>) offers high school juniors one-on-one college counseling,

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including help creating a list of potential schools, writing essays, completing applications, applying for financial aid, searching for scholarships, and selecting a college. It also provides summer programming for students admitted to college, including group workshops on the college environment, social events, assistance with enrollment, housing, and course registration, and financial aid advising. In addition, Bottom Line offers counseling and mentoring for up to six years, including advice on selecting a major, securing internships, finding a career path, and managing loan debt.

We identified no initiatives offering a breadth of activities and supports comparable to WCR. Programs that focus on career exposure and readiness generally do not pay as much attention to college readiness, nor do they provide academic instruction and tutoring. Many programs aimed at college admission offer campus visits, supplemental academics, and assistance with college applications, scholarships, and financial aid. But few of these also include the experiential learning, leadership development activities, and international travel offered by WCR. And while many initiatives include a mentoring component, few appear to provide multiyear mentoring relationships focusing on academics, college, and career development, with established professionals.

Most college access programs aim to serve low-income students or those who will be the first in their families to attend college. Some serve students who have been identified as at risk of academic failure, while others focus on those who are succeeding academically, and a few (like WCR) appear to target students who are underperforming relative to their potential. Although descriptions of these programs suggest that most students participating in them are youth of color, few initiatives explicitly aim to serve young men of color.

WCR stands out as an intensive model, explicitly targeted to the challenges facing young men of color, and as a one that applies the research-informed principles of positive youth development. WCR is also well-resourced, deploying the assets of Green Backs to recruit well-qualified staff and partners to support fellows' travel and other enrichment activities, provide mentors, and make facilities available for programming. Other programs may not have the capacity to deliver the full range of activities and supports offered by WCR.

Nonetheless, data and analysis focused on the experiences and achievements of the WCR fellows could yield valuable insights for the field, including identifying promising components—or combinations of components—that could be replicated more broadly. WCR may also offer lessons about how collaboration with private-sector institutions may be a mechanism for involving mentors and other volunteers who commit to developing to deeper, multiyear relationships with young people.

Documenting the design and implementation of WCR highlights other opportunities to learn more from WCR and other programs about how best to improve outcomes for young men of color. Additional investigation could help answer such questions as the following:

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- What motivates individual young men of color to participate in programs like WCR, how do they assess the benefits of participation, and what aspects of these programs do they consider valuable, and why? In-depth interviews and focus groups could shed valuable light on how participants experience and evaluate the services and activities, and could offer insights to other initiatives looking to adapt or expand their offerings.
- How do programs systematically assess the short-term and long-term growth and development of participating young men of color, and do these measures fully reflect the programs' theories of change? The positive youth development literature highlights the importance of competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring (Lerner 2005), arguing that measures of these attributes would be more relevant indicators of long-term success than high school grades or test scores. Research that tests and refines tools for measuring such developmental qualities could contribute to programs' capacity to effectively assess participants' progress. Such research could also explore how tools for tracking the developmental growth and progress of young adults needs to be tailored to populations that may have distinct needs, like young men of color.
- What program components constitute essential ingredients for success, and how much time or exposure to these components is required to achieve impact? And does an integrated model, which combines multiple components, yield substantially better outcomes?

Addressing these questions would require rigorous documentation and evaluation of individual components, such as academics, mentoring, leadership development, college guidance, nonacademic enrichment activities, or peer learning. It may also entail comparing participant outcomes across program locations and programs serving similar students, or for a comparison group of students receiving no services.

Further research of this kind could help expand and strengthen the programs and initiatives aimed at helping young men of color overcome long-standing structural challenges that, for too many, block the path to college and career and rob our nation of the diverse workforce it needs to thrive.

Notes

1. This framework pulls from the ecological perspective developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), which is widely accepted in the field of developmental psychology.
2. For a full discussion of these overlapping contexts, see Rawlings (2015).
3. Nine percent of applications lacked information about family income, 20 percent lacked parent or guardian academic degree information, and 26 percent lacked grade information.

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4. The plan is for this questionnaire to be re-administered either once or twice a year to gauge any changes.

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About the Authors

Margery Austin Turner is senior vice president for program planning and management at the Urban Institute, where she leads efforts to frame and conduct a forward-looking agenda of policy research. A nationally recognized expert on urban policy and neighborhood issues, Turner has analyzed issues of residential location, racial and ethnic discrimination and its contribution to neighborhood segregation and inequality, and the role of housing policies in promoting residential mobility and location choice. Among her recent publications is the book *Public Housing and the Legacy of Segregation*.

Before joining Urban, Turner served as deputy assistant secretary for research at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from 1993 through 1996, focusing HUD's research agenda on the problems of racial discrimination, concentrated poverty, and economic opportunity in America's metropolitan areas. During her tenure, HUD's research office launched three major social science demonstration projects to test different strategies for helping families from distressed inner-city neighborhoods gain access to opportunities through employment and education.

Turner has a BA in political science from Cornell University and an MA in urban and regional planning from the George Washington University.

Marla McDaniel is a senior research associate in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute. Before joining Urban, she was a postdoctoral fellow at the Columbia University School of Social Work. McDaniel has researched, written about, and spoken about racial disparities; low-income children, youth, and families; and the programs and policy environments that touch families' lives. She is interested in the relationships between vulnerabilities and in how inequality across multiple domains—including health, education, and employment—has a compounding effect on overall health and well-being.

McDaniel earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Swarthmore College and worked as a case manager for youth in foster care before earning a doctorate in human development and social policy from Northwestern University.

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APPENDIX B: SOCIAL CHALLENGE

WCR Fellows Tribute - Grant Application

Summary Social Challenge, in partnership with the Green Backs, will be providing funding to community-based organizations to implement a project addressing one or more of the key issue areas identified by WCR Fellows.

Sources of Funding Green Backs utilizes the talent of their employees to facilitate the mentorship program, WCR. This initiative is dedicated to improving education outcomes for young men of color. WCR provides intensive academic and leadership training to help 60 young men in Chicago complete their high school education and better prepare them to excel in colleges and universities. WCR is part of the firm's broader ongoing efforts to provide adults and young people with the education, skills and resources that contribute to greater economic mobility. To date, more than 200 Green Backs employees have worked with WCR Fellows as mentors, coaches, role models, speakers, or volunteers in various capacities. Since its launch in 2010, the program has been expanded to include classes in Dallas, Los Angeles, and New York, in addition to Chicago.

Social Challenge is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization whose mission is to develop community leaders and engaged, informed, active citizens. We are a dynamic youth empowerment agency that provides high school students with unique civic learning opportunities and hands-on experiences in political campaigns, public policy advocacy, government internships, and youth activism programs. Named for Chicago leaders Joe and Sandy Social, we have grown quickly in our 19 years and we now serve 15,000 students annually in Chicago, Southern California, and Washington, D.C.

Background Over the course of several months, Social Challenge staff attended WCR sessions to guide the Fellows through the Social Challenge "Youth Change-Maker" process and provide leadership and teambuilding focused on building collaboration, critical thinking, and communication skills. This process began with "Project Soapbox" where the Fellows crafted speeches on issues that mattered to them and had the opportunity to perform their speech for the WCR class. Through this process, the Fellows began identifying issues in their schools and communities they wanted to address. Using an asset-based approach, Fellows also identified their personal and community assets and reflected on how those assets can address an issue the Fellows identified in their communities and schools. Social Challenge staff collected all the issues and grouped them into the six key issue areas including:

- Food deserts
- Gun violence

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- Lack of extracurricular opportunities in schools
- Lack of job opportunities for youth
- Lack of support for undocumented students and families
- Mental Health Stigma

Social Challenge staff facilitated an activity to understand the root causes by analyzing the issues in terms of symptoms and causes. The Fellows worked in small groups to complete a root cause analysis for each of the six issue areas listed above and identified actionable roots that can be addressed through community-based partnerships. When given the opportunity to analyze the root causes of the issues that impact them, young people are empowered with the knowledge to identify solutions that would best address that issue. The issues areas listed above are complex public health issues and this RFP is a unique opportunity to implement solutions identified by young people. In addition, the WCR Fellows are leading the effort in designing and evaluating the proposals.

The Fellows are serving a youth philanthropists for community-based projects that address one or more of the key issue areas identified. Many of these issue areas align with the Green Backs priorities of workforce readiness and community development.

Eligibility and Application Format This RFP is limited to projects addressing one or more of the issue areas outlined in the section above. The Fellows have identified two steps the selected grantees must fulfill as a term of the grant. These steps must be incorporated as part of the larger project proposal. The steps include:

- Gun Violence
 - Step 1: Identify 2-3 areas within a community area(s) where there are higher rates of gun violence.
 - Step 2: Identify people inside and outside the community who can serve as mentors to young people in their community who have been exposed to gun violence in these areas.
- Mental Health Stigma
 - Step 1: Create and distribute a survey to collect information on current knowledge and perception of mental illness among Chicago youth.
 - Step 2: Host workshops to build awareness around mental illness.
- Food Deserts

Capstone Project

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- Step 1: Host community forum (with emphasis on community youth voices) to understand the wants and needs around healthy food.

- Step 2: Create a feasible plan to expand food pantries and/or farmers' markets and incorporate findings from community forum.

- Lack of extracurricular opportunities in schools

- Step 1: Survey youth to learn about their interests and identify partners that could provide related programming.

- Step 2: Host an event where all identified partners attend so students can sign up for extracurricular opportunities at the event. Local businesses should also be involved in maintaining the sustainability of the programs.

- Lack of employment opportunities for youth

- Step 1: Create and distribute a survey in high schools to understand the types of jobs youth are interested in.

- Step 2: Use survey data to host a job fair for youth who need money to support themselves and encourage potential employers to offer "on the spot" hiring.

- Lack of support for undocumented students

- Step 1: Host a program to help DACA youth financially.

- Step 2: Serve as a resource for undocumented students and their families.

Fellows will also consider projects that address the following areas:

- Youth homelessness

- Youth-police relations

- Pregnant and/or parenting youth

- Teen dating violence

- Youth substance abuse

- Support for teens in single-parent households

Any applicant who applies for a project that addresses those issues will be required to submit the **first three steps** of their project in their proposal.

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Application Requirements:

- Be a 501(c)(3) organization.
- Be requesting funds for projects/initiatives that have a direct connection to one or more of the key issue areas identified by WCR.
- Have the organizational capacity to implement the steps identified by WCR for the issue area the project is addressing.

How To Apply: Please submit the application in the form of a video. The video must include:

- Overview of organization
- Which of the key issues identified by WCR will the proposed project address and why was it selected
- Goal/objectives of proposed project
- Identify the community area or neighborhood the project will operate in and what the expected impact is
- Outline how the applicant will implement the two or three steps identified by WCR and provide a timeline for the project
- Explain how the organization will engage the community and young people

The components above can be addressed in one video or in separate video files. The total length of all the videos should be no more than eight (8) minutes.

Applicants must also complete an online form to provide information about the applying organization and the proposed project's budget. A link to the form is provided below.

Available Funding and Contract Terms Between \$30,000 - \$40,000 for two to three organizations is available for the implementation of the WCR Chicago Fellows Tribute grants. Applicants may request funds between \$10,000 and \$20,000; not all grantees will receive the maximum amount requested. Applicants will be notified by the end of April about the requested funding.

Funds must be used between **July 1, 2018** and **December 31, 2018**. Successful applicants will receive notification of funding prior to the contract start date.

Evaluation of Proposals The Chicago WCR Fellows will review and evaluate the proposals using the following standard scoring rubric.

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Section Meets Criteria Available Points

Organization
Experience

The organization has experience implementing the type of work outlined in this proposal. The applicant organization has significant experience working within the targeted community area.

15

Research

The organization finds and understands the root causes of the selected issue area(s) and the proposed project has

evidence of being successful in addressing the selected issue area(s).

25

Clarity of Goals and Objectives

It is clear how the organization's mission aligns with the proposed project. The goals and objectives of proposed project are clearly defined.

25

Innovative and Creative

Proposed project meets a need in the community and utilizes steps outlined by

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WCR. The organization utilizes their areas of expertise to engage youth in the community throughout the project implementation.

There is a clear connection between the costs outlined in the budget and the goals and objectives outlined in the proposal.

25

10

Budget

Total Possible Points 100

Submission All complete applications must be submitted by **11:59 pm on Friday, April 20**.

Applicants must complete [this form](#) and submit the video as a link in the form or email the video to staff@socialchallenge.org. Applicants must also produce a budget justification as an Excel document outlining what the awarded funding will be used for. Please follow the format provided in the template below:

Expense Item Amount Purpose Notes

Total: The total amount on the budget should match the total amount of funding requested in the application.

For additional questions, please contact Staff Person at staff@socialchallenge.org

APPENDIX C: LESSON PLAN ON RALPH ELLISON'S *THE INVISIBLE MAN*

Lesson Plan on *The Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison

September 29, 2018

Saturday Session

Purpose: The purpose of this lesson is to prompt my students to understand and be able to examine the voice of Ralph Ellison's invisible character. Students are examining the voice of the character and the tone of Ellison. Students will be able to explain how they are connected to the central character.

Objective: Students will understand how the central characters invisibility is metaphorical and a reflection of the society he lives in.

Common Core Standards

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

Materials:

- excerpt of *The Invisible Man*: Prologue, Chapter 1 and 2

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- Pen and Paper
- Promethean Board and Laptop
- Organization of Class:
- Use of Socratic Method
- Small /Cooperative Circle

Bell Ringer: Explain your perception of invisibility as described in the text. 10 minutes

Debrief: 7 minutes

Focus Questions: 45 minutes

1. How does the author bring to life the concept of invisibility for you as Black man or Mexican man in the United States using this quote?

Quote:

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids - and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination - indeed, everything and anything except me.

2. Is the character believable in his narrative in the Prologue? Why or Why not?
3. Have you ever felt like you were invisible? Does this quote reflect any of your experiences as men of color?

Quote:

Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of a biochemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. I am not complaining, nor am I protesting either. It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen, although it is most often rather wearing on the nerves. Then too, you're constantly being bumped against by those of poor vision. Or again, you often doubt if you really exist. You wonder whether you aren't simply a phantom in other people's minds. Say, a figure

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in a nightmare which the sleeper tries with all his strength to destroy. It's when you feel like this that, out of resentment, you begin to bump people back. And, let me confess, you feel that way most of the time. You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you're a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognized you. And, alas, it's seldom successful.

4. Using one quote from the text, explain how your ethnicity or culture has been made invisible just like the central character. Be specific and explain.