

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: STUDENT VOICE AND RE/IMAGINING
BLACK EDUCATION

By

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ABSTRACT

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Using a qualitative, phenomenological research design this dissertation examined the experiences of a group of Black high school students who were receiving supplemental support from a school-community partnership in an urban school district. The literature that examines school, community and family partnerships is largely absent of students voices however, authentic partnerships are highly sought as a reform strategy in many predominantly Black schools. This is despite literature that argues for the inclusion of Black students in school reform decisions to combat the persistence of anti-Blackness in their education. Using a Black Critical Epistemology, the aim of this study was to reassess the efficacy and utility of school-community partnerships as a mechanism for improving the educational experiences of Black students. Through document analysis, focus groups, and student and adult interviews I sought to understand how the partnership was impacting students school experiences and if the partnership was efficacious at improving the whole school environment. Findings indicate that students formed strong relationships with the facilitators of the partnership due to their ability to engage them meaningfully and by centering their wellness. However, the presence of the partnership resulted in a sensed diminishment of responsibility for student wellness from educators and school leaders. Also, the partnership often aligned with school-centered goals which may unintentionally perpetuate anti-Black school norms. This study concludes with how we might reconceptualize school, community and family partnerships in research, policy, and practice.

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Latanya Kaigler for truly believing in me in all walks of life leading up to this momentous achievement. We have walked this and every road together.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

Michigan's Department of Education have partnership agreements with 34 schools and districts across the state who have repeatedly under-performed on standardized academic measures (Michigan Department of Education, 2017). Of these 34 state-mandated partnership agreements, 29 are with schools and districts that educates predominantly Black student populations (Michigan Department of Education, 2017; 2019). Most of these schools and districts are also characterized as *urban*, and literature supports students attending schools in urban areas are more susceptible to issues including transportation, safety, housing, and income inequality which adversely affects their educational experiences (Milner R. H., 2012; Michigan Department of Education, 2017). As the use of partnerships are increasing per policy mandates and through the initiation of administrative, community, and family stakeholders to address these issues, more research is needed to understand their impact and possibilities as a school reform strategy. In considering the challenges faced by many students attending urban schools, the use of partnerships can potentially act as an alternative strategy to traditional school reform which often occurs through a top-down approach (Green & Gooden, 2014; Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). Pazey, Cole & Spikes (2017) highlight the adverse implications of top-down school reform on low-income and communities of color due to their colorblind and decontextualized decision-making that emphasizes academic measures with minimal attention to the broader structural barriers perpetuating academic disparities. Also, they and other scholars highlight the unsustainability of top-down reform strategies, and their causality of school closures and the economic and political disinvestment of urban communities (Green & Gooden, 2014; Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019; Pazey, Cole, & Spikes, 2017).

These adverse effects of top-down school reform are indicative of a need for an alternative approach to improve the conditions of urban education. As such, scholars have argued for the use of bottom-up, or community-based reform strategies which engages students, families, community members, organizations, and schools to partake in change efforts that are context-specific (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019; Khalifa, 2012; Pazey, Cole, & Spikes, 2017). In this study, I center on the use of school, community, and family (SCF) partnerships as a strategy of bottom up, or community-based school reform. I refer to SCF partnerships as the collaborative engagement of schools with students, families, and communities to address mutually agreed upon goals to improve students' school environments (Epstein, 1987; Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). As I conceptualize SCF partnerships in this way, particular attention has been given to partnerships that have been implemented in urban schools. Many of which are predominantly Black and have large populations of students who identify as Latinx, Native American, Asian/Asian-American, and additional minoritized racial identities.

Across the literature and in public discourse, urban schools are commonly understood as being high-poverty high-minority (HPHM) (Milner R. H., 2012; Khalifa, 2012). Research documents the increased responsibilities placed upon school leaders to address the challenges that inhibit the success of students who attend HPHM schools, and the implications of engaging in SCF partnerships to increase principals' capacities to do so (Milner R. H., 2012; Khalifa, Gooden & Davis, 2016; Khalifa, 2012; Johnson, 2007; Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). Through the engagement of SCF partnerships, school leaders have acquired resources to increase students' access to basic needs, decrease disciplinary infractions, provide supplemental educational services, and address school safety; all are issues which are commonly associated with HPHM schools (Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). With more comprehensive SCF

partnerships, schools have been positioned as ‘community institutions’ and mobilization efforts have occurred between families, communities, and school leaders to disrupt educational and social disparities (Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). These are only a few examples of the utility of SCF partnerships but are indicative of their potential to address numerous context-related issues that are prevalent in urban education.

Overall, the use of SCF partnerships as a reform strategy provides an opportunity for urban schools and communities to increase their capacity to implement changes, repair relationships, and to increase the responsiveness of school organizations to students’ needs (Epstein, 1987; Johnson, 2007; Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). Thus, they represent a unique opportunity for the inclusion of often excluded groups to aid in shaping urban schools in the best interest of their students (Johnson, 2007). However, missing from the literature are the voices of the students themselves. As a result, the possibilities of SCF partnerships as a school reform strategy are incalculable because students possess valuable and critical perspectives that are often different from adults (Mitra & Gross, 2009). Further, the voices of Black and additional racially minoritized students are discounted in the partnership literature despite studies that discuss their significance in urban school reform (Dolan, Christens, & Lin, 2015; Jones, 2002; Lac & Cumings Mansfield, 2018; Yonezawa & Jones, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

There are a substantial number of studies that center on the implementation of SCF partnerships in urban education; however, the broad presence of students’ voices in the literature is limited. As a result of this limitation in the research, the possibilities of student voice within SCF partnerships are under-conceptualized. This is a limitation that poses several problems, two of which I emphasized in this dissertation study. The first problem is that without the presence of

students' voices critical perspectives are missing from the SCF partnership literature that can inform our understandings of their utility in urban schools; the second problem is that by excluding students input, we are unaware of how efficacious existing partnerships are at mitigating the issues that they intend to address (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017; Dolan, Christens, & Lin, 2015; Mitra, 2018). These shortcomings in the literature are an indication that students are not often considered stakeholders in the SCF partnership process (Lyons, Brasof, & Baron, 2020). However, without positioning students as stakeholders we risk engaging in partnerships without completely knowing the implications of their impact in urban school environments. While these problems are relevant for students voices more broadly, I examined these through the voices of Black students' who were involved in a partnership that was occurring in their predominantly Black, urban school.

Problem 1: Black Students Voices as Critical for SCF Partnerships

The shortage of literature that centers students' voices within urban, SCF partnerships suggests limitations in our understandings of the possibilities of partnerships as a school reform strategy (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017; Dolan, Christens, & Lin, 2015; Mitra, 2018). School leaders in urban education have engaged in partnerships to address several challenges that span across students' school and community environments (Green T., 2015; Green & Gooden, 2014; Johnson, 2007; Sanders, 2009). However, stakeholders in the partnership process are often parents and community members whereas students are infrequently given opportunities to voice their perspectives or make decision's regarding their implementation. By discounting their voices, school leaders and other adults are engaging in partnerships with assumptions regarding students' needs (Mitra & Gross, 2009; Lyons, Brasof, & Baron, 2020). Also, through the use of partnerships adults who are external stakeholders are

reshaping school environments without consulting with students regarding desired changes (Pazey, Cole, & Spikes, 2017). Given this limitation within the research examining SCF partnerships, we are not completely aware of the implications of their inclusion within urban schools.

However, based on literature that has centered the voices of Black students in reforms we know that their participation can influence impactful and sustainable changes when they are positioned to work alongside adults (Bertrand, 2018; Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017). Further, Black students have been shown to possess different perspectives regarding school reform and decision-making than their principals and teachers (Lee, 1999). The literature regarding student voice and school reform has thoroughly documented students' efforts in advocating for educators to reposition them from being 'passive' objects or beings, to 'active' players, participants, and change agents (Ruddock, 2007; Mitra D., 2008). When repositioned, Black students' voices have been valuable to identifying and addressing barriers in school environments that adversely affects them, their peers, and their families (Bertrand, 2018).

For example, within urban spaces, Black students have successfully advocated for reform regarding curriculum changes and meaningful learning opportunities (Jones, 2002), been vocal about racist practices (Bertrand, 2014), and have engaged in research projects to inquire about issues affecting their peers (Warren & Marciano, 2018). Black students have also impacted social justice-oriented reforms in their communities either as leaders or collaborators (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017). The literature examining the impact of Black students' voices highlights the unknown possibilities that can manifest when these students are engaged as curators of knowledge, collaborators, and co-leaders in reform (Yonezawa & Jones, 2009). In this study, I will employ a similar perspective. If Black students are given opportunities for

voice, the possibilities for the implications of SCF partnerships as an urban school reform strategy are incalculable.

Problem 2: Black Student Voices for Understanding the Efficacy of SCF Partnerships

The engagement of Black student's voices is not only important to inform the possibilities of future partnerships, but also to communicate the extent to which existing SCF partnerships are mitigating the issues that they intend to address in urban schools. However, the literature also falls short in engaging students to assess the efficacy of SCF partnerships.

According to Mansfield, Welton & Halx (2012), student voice is the most genuine means of evaluating reform initiatives that are taking place in their schools. Black students navigate school environments differently than adults and have identified school structures that are either enabling or inhibiting their success (Lee, 1999; Smyth, 2006). Therefore, relying solely on the feedback of school leaders or arbitrary measures to determine the efficacy of partnerships is limiting. The emphasis here is not solely on *what* issues partnerships are addressing but also on *how* they are doing so. The examination of Black students' interactions with partners, which are aimed at mitigating issues in relation to larger contextual factors, can provide critical information for leaders who want to engage in partnerships across the field of urban education (Green T., 2015; Khalifa, 2012).

A Black Critical Epistemology

In this study, I relied on a Black critical epistemology to challenge dominant notions of 'truth' that are reflective of Eurocentric ways of knowing and that shapes the educational experiences of Black youth. In theorizing a Black critical epistemology, I drew from extensive research that speaks to the conditions of education as consequence of the prioritization of Eurocentric knowledge as 'truth' which invalidates the knowledges of Black populations and

their resistance to the dismantling of Black ideologies (Almeida, 2015; Bernal, 2002; Dillard, 2000; Gordon, 1009; Ladson-Billings, 2003) A consequence of this invalidation, as enacted by societal ascribing to Eurocentric epistemologies, is the perpetual harm enacted on Black bodies and minds in schools (Coles, 2020). Ascribing to this Eurocentric epistemology further harms Black populations because without the oppression and ‘othering’ of Black and additional marginalized groups Eurocentric ‘truth’ is baseless (Almeida, 2015). Used as an interpretative framework, I analyzed students interview data while staying close to the assumption that their experiential knowledge within their school, communities, and the school-community partnership had not been previously incorporated into conversations of school reform. Further, based on previous literature I assumed that students’ experiences were racialized despite Eurocentric claims of meritocracy which attributes racial inequities to socio-economic status (Dumas, 2016; Milner R. , 2012). These notions fuel deficit-oriented perspectives of Black students despite their continued resistance to racist educational policies and practices (Milner R. , 2012). Therefore, a Black critical epistemology was utilized to interpret students’ responses as knowledge, and to challenge the Eurocentric positioning of Black students as ‘truth’.

Delgado (2002), Bernal (2002), and Ladson-Billings (2000) suggests that researcher epistemologies are systems of knowing that are connected to researchers’ perceptions of society based our positions in the world that influences our lived and learned knowledges. As a Black woman, I recognize that knowledge is constructed based on the positions of individuals in society but for Black people our knowledges are criticized, invalidated, and silenced despite our heterogenous identities. Race-based epistemologies challenges the positioning of the knowledge of racialized groups as subaltern, invalid and illegitimate (Bernal, 2002; Almeida, 2015). Almeida (2015) states that in using race-based epistemologies to guide research we assume that

“the subaltern body is socially, politically and racially marginalized so that they can never express their ways of knowing without being ‘Othered’, oppressed and repressed, across time and space” (pg. 81). The conditions of Black schooling across U.S. contexts and the perpetual effort to keep Black communities out of integral decision-making spaces is evidence of this marginalization, oppression and othering which compelled me to engage in this research with a Black student participant group who were attending a predominantly Black, urban high school.

Also, as a Black woman who have been educated in U.S. systems of K-12 and higher education I possess knowledge of how Eurocentric epistemologies shape education and consequently, the perceptions of Black students and families. This dominant epistemological perspective informs policies and practices that adversely impact Black schools and positions students, their families, and communities as passive actors in their education. This is despite the long history of Black populations engaging in leadership and activism to counteract racist educational policies. Therefore, a Black critical epistemology was imperative as it centered on students individual and shared realities to aid in the reconstruction of their education particularly regarding school-community partnerships in urban schools. Additionally, with this research I intended to add to the literature that theorizes the shape and necessity of a ‘Black student voice’ in school reform. The remainder of this section provides evidence of the necessity of a Black critical epistemology to foreground this study.

In using a Black critical epistemology, I acknowledge how Black communities have been acted upon through racist systems of U.S. education and society more broadly, and their resistance to racialized treatment. Foremost, is the acknowledgement of anti-Blackness as endemic to U.S. society, including the operation of K-12 schools. Anti-Blackness is rooted in the permanence of racism for the functionality of U.S. society where Blackness is the most

disdained, and Black bodies dehumanized (Dumas, 2016). Therefore, given that I worked with a Black student participant group, I could not examine their perceptions of the school-community partnership in relation to their learning experiences without addressing the role of race and racism in the construction of their schooling. It would be an injustice. Coles (2020) adds that by avoiding the ways structures of anti-Blackness shape the realities of Black urban youth's lived experiences we as educators and researchers' risk "invisibilizing anti-Blackness" which further perpetuates students suffering in education (pg. 2). Because this study was intended to be liberatory for students in which they were the curators of knowledge, as opposed to the normative suppression of Black voices in integral spaces in education, it is necessary to acknowledge their experiences as inherently racialized (Warren & Coles, 2020).

Critical scholars assert that Anti-Blackness stems from the historical positioning of Black populations as inhumane, dating back to chattel slavery through the present day (Dumas & Ross, 2016; Coles, 2020). Dumas (2016) discusses slavery as the ontological position of Black people through which they are imagined and acted upon in U.S. society. In relation, Warren & Coles (2020) discusses how this positioning is necessary for the sustainment of the "white supremacists power structure" that constructs U.S. society. Through educational policies and practices that influence the deprivation of resources, culturally inappropriate curriculum, biased parent and community engagement, and exclusionary discipline, education systems perpetuate anti-Black notions that maintain the status quo (Dumas & Ross, 2016). Therefore, U.S. schools plays a vital role in the perpetuation of systemic harm that is enacted on Black students, their families, and communities.

For example, Black boys are often criminalized, and Black girls are increasingly facing exclusionary treatment in schools and often undergo hostile learning environments (Coles,

2020). This treatment of Black students is deficit rooted, where students individual, familial and community attributes have infrequently been viewed as assets to the formation of social and educational constructs (Green T. L., 2015). This is post-desegregation and what Walker (2009) names the “second-class integration” that discarded schools that were by and for Black communities and placed Black students in schools that embody Eurocentrism. This has since adversely affected the relationships of Black communities and educational systems. The disruption of Black educational systems which were rooted in Blackness as led by Black leaders and educators removed the embeddedness of student’s cultures, values, and traditions from their schooling experiences, and problematizes their reluctance to white conformity in contemporary K-12 schools (Anderson, 1988). Therefore, Black students’ ways of knowing, dress, communication, and coping mechanisms are seen as disorderly by educators which creates harmful school spaces as indicated by the students in this study (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016).

However, Black students, parents and their communities have not been silent in their fight against racialized oppression in schools and broader contexts. Black youth have utilized public demonstrations of resistance including but not limited to school walkouts, marches, town halls, and open letters to decision makers to communicate their resistance to racialized oppression through educational means (Goss & Patel, 2021). Protests have been initiated against school segregation, school closures, lunch options, curriculum, and discipline policies amongst other inequities (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017). Additionally, in contemporary society we have seen Black youth take an active stance in the Black Lives Matter movements just as they had during the Civil Rights Movements against the dehumanization of Black bodies (Mauldin, 2020). Black youth have been publicly active in their fight against racialized violence

but are consistently treated as passive beings in education who must be acted for rather than *with* (Bertrand, 2018). This is given the assumptions of normative society that Black youth lack the ability to substantially shape education systems given that their resistance to white conformity is used as a basis to undermine their intellectual capability.

Given this, it was imperative that I center on Black students' voices because in improving education for Black students we will be equipped with the tools to improve education for all students (Price-Dennis, Womack, McArthur, & Haddix, 2017). Mohammad & Haddix (2016) discusses this in the context of improving the education of Black girls, specifically noting that we must begin with the group of students who has been the most underserved and the most marginalized before we can improve education for all students. Black students have been the most adversely treated racial group in contemporary education (Warren & Coles, 2020). Therefore, in centering Black students voices to understand their experiences with school-community partnerships we gain insight into the most discerning perceptions of the contributions of partnerships to urban school environments. Further, in examining the utility of partnerships from the lenses of Black students we can apply a racialized understanding to the issues that partnerships are intended to address.

Here, I critique the use of partnerships that aim to address social issues of housing, transportation, and food insecurity for example, without acknowledging the racial inequities that contribute to these challenges in predominantly Black school districts. Further, those that aims to restructure predominantly Black school environments without fundamentally reassessing the purpose of schooling for Black students, and thus influencing environments to be more responsive to their needs as opposed to the needs of educational institutions. In doing so, scholars assert that we must focus on the liberatory education of Black students where barriers

are dismantled and not simply mitigated. In this study, I intended to gain an understanding of how SCF partnership were playing a role in the pursuit of improving urban education for this group of Black student participants.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how a group of students were experiencing the services provided by a school-community partnership, and how they made meaning of the partnership's contribution to their educational experiences. Upon beginning the study, I emphasized Black students' voices given the significance of their reflections about their experiences in their urban school. As SCF partnerships are a largely advocated reform strategy in urban education, we have a responsibility to ensure that these partnerships improve the educational experiences of Black students. Black students largely populate urban schools but again, are adversely treated within U.S. society where systems of education perpetuate racial inequities. While SCF partnerships can potentially address these inequities, we must consult students who are direct recipients of their engagement (Green, 2015; Mitra, 2009). The information provided in this chapter is not meant to suggest that existing partnerships are not being implemented with positive intent, or that they are not making substantial changes in urban schools. However, this study does aim to push our conceptualization of the utility and efficacy of SCF partnerships in urban education and reposition Black students, and subsequently students more broadly, as stakeholders within the process.

Research supports that school reform can be successfully implemented *with* the collaboration of students (Mitra & Gross, 2009). Therefore, this study was also intended to communicate the actions of adult actors and organizational structures that influenced these students' perceptions of the partnership. In presenting these findings I hope that we can better understand how we might cultivate improved student-adult collaboration when implementing

partnerships in urban schools. To guide this dissertation study, I developed the following research questions:

1. How do Black students make meaning of their experiences with an urban, school-community partnership occurring in their urban school?
2. What organizational structures contributes to students' perceptions with the school-community partnership?

Significance to the Field

Urban education research discusses a range of issues impacting Black students, families, and their communities. Also, the need for principals and administrators to engage in leadership that is culturally and contextually responsive to their Black stakeholders given their perpetual exclusion in integral spaces of educational decision-making (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). Given the racial injustices that places constraints on human and capital resources in predominantly Black, urban schools the ability to tend to all the issues affecting students as an educational administrator is impossible (Milner R. H., 2012). SCF partnerships are often suggested as a strategy to increase the capacity of principals and educators to address extant school and community needs and engage stakeholders in re/constructing school spaces. Successes and failures of partnerships are thoroughly demonstrated across the literature from the lenses of adult stakeholders however the voices of students are limited. The voices of Black students are situated here given their prevalent attendance to urban schools, adverse racialized experiences, and direct interactions SCF partners. By discounting student's voices across the literature educators, stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers are unaware of the extent to which SCF partnerships are affecting their schooling experiences. Without attending to the experiences of Black students, we are unaware of partnerships ability to inform liberatory school

environments. In lacking critical knowledge, the possibilities of SCF partnerships are unknown. In this study, I intend to contribute to scholarly conversations in relation to this limitation in the literature, and to inform future practice, policy, and research.

Summary and Overview of the Dissertation

In this qualitative, phenomenological study, I examined the experiences of four Black, high school aged students who were recipients of services provided by an urban, school-community partnership. I aimed to understand students' perceptions of their involvement with the partnership in relation to their broader schooling experiences. I also sought knowledge of organizational structures in their high school that were influencing their experiences. The purpose of this study was to push the conceptualization of school, community, and family (SCF) partnerships for school leaders, educators, family and community stakeholders, and researchers who argue for this strategy as a mechanism of school reform. Currently, SCF partnerships are presented in the literature from the lenses of these adult stakeholders. However, I center on the perspectives of students regarding the role of SCF partnerships in urban schools in hope that as a field we will begin to position them as stakeholders in this process. Particularly, I argue for the insertion of Black students' voices given the normative exclusion of their individual, familial and community assets within conversations of school reform.

To examine students experiences I conducted individual interviews with each participant and then held two group sessions where students engaged in a series of dialogues about the meaning of their involvement with the partnership. Additionally, I interviewed two adult actors who were coordinators of the partnership's services and conducted analyses of key documents that were used to determine the goals of the community partner. Students' experiences were examined from a Black critical epistemological perspective because I felt that I could not

accurately portray their voices without acknowledging their racialized experiences in K-12 schools. However, I discuss current conceptualizations of SCF partnerships within the context of urban education more broadly given the large populations of Black students who are educated within urban school spaces (Milner, 2012).

This chapter provided a background and necessary context, research problems and purpose, and the epistemological framework that I utilized to construct this research study. In chapter two, I provide an introduction of student voice frameworks, and of the literature that examines SCF partnerships in urban schools and communities which guided this study. In chapter three I discuss the methodologies that were used, followed by a presentation of findings from my conversations with students' and adults in chapter's four and five respectively. Lastly, in chapter six I provide discussions of the study's implications and conclusions. Below is a list of key words that I will reference throughout the study but that carries several interpretations.

CHAPTER 2: LITEATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Literature Review

This literature review aims to provide a synthesis of prior research that underlies the potential role of Black students' voices within the use of school, community, and family (SCF) partnerships in urban schools. This review begins by presenting frameworks that center student voice within school reform from educational research and leadership lenses. These frameworks particularly center Black and additional students of color and have aided in my understanding of student voice, and the potential implications of including students in SCF partnerships despite the limited literature that bridges these two areas of scholarship. In the literature examining SCF partnerships students' voices are almost absent. However, partnerships are understood as an important community-based, school reform strategy and are often utilized to combat the effects of decontextualized top-down reform decisions in urban education. To communicate their impact, this review includes the most relevant literature concerning SCF partnerships from the lenses of school leaders, parents, and community-based organizations, after a brief overview that explains the context of urban education. Considering the vast amount of literature available on the topic, I have described SCF partnerships according to two categories: school-centered and student-centered. I end this review with a conceptual framework that communicates how a review of the literature has informed the development of my dissertation study.

Student Voice and School Reform

Traditionally, educational research, policy and reform has occurred in a way that positions students as passive beings in their educational contexts (Bertrand, 2018; Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017; Warren & Marciano, Activating student voice through youth participaroy action research (YPAR): Policy making that strengthens urban education

reform, 2018). This is especially true for students attending urban schools that largely educates low-income and students of color (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017). As such, this section provides a synthesis of the literature that argues for the use of *student voice* to influence school reform. Student voice refers to the ways that students can contribute to the educational experiences of them and their peers through various phases of involvement (Mitra & Gross, 2009). The literature typically explores the contributions of student voice within two categories: in educational research and school-based leadership.

In educational research Black and additional racially minoritized students have endured a history of dehumanizing practices to inform educational policies (Bertrand, 2018; Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017). In educational leadership, these students have been typically silenced in decision-making and school reform conversations (Mansfield, Welton, & Halx, 2012; Mitra & Gross, 2009). In recent years however, an increasing number of studies have argued for educational researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to center students' knowledges within school reform due to their direct experiences in their educational contexts. As such, a few major frameworks have emerged to understand and facilitate student voice within school reform. The use of youth participatory action research (YPAR) has become a commonly used framework which challenges *who* can create and disseminate knowledge regarding the conditions of education, particularly for students of color (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017). In educational leadership, scholars have also put forth frameworks that examines how student voice can influence the structures of school organizations (Bertrand, 2014; Mansfield, Welton, & Halx, 2012; Mitra & Gross, 2009). This section discusses these student voice frameworks and their contributions to how I have conceptualized the role of student voice in school reform, and subsequently in this study.

YPAR: A Research-based Framework for Student Voice

YPAR is presented as a critical-epistemological framework that positions students as experts of their own experiences (Bertrand, 2018; Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017; Radina, et al., 2018; Warren & Marciano, Activating student voice through youth participatory action research (YPAR): Policy making that strengthens urban education reform, 2018). It is a framework that “centers youth and their communities, alongside practitioners, scholars, and researchers, as knowledge producers and change agents for social justice” (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017, p. 312). Because YPAR is rooted in critical pedagogy, youth are recognized as intellectual beings who are capable of critically examining the issues that are present in their schools and communities (Bertrand, 2018; Warren & Marciano, Activating student voice through youth participatory action research (YPAR): Policy making that strengthens urban education reform, 2018). Further, YPAR recognizes student’s possession of cultural knowledges that are valuable to understanding the social structures that affects them (Radina, et al., 2018). In educational contexts, YPAR represents an alternative strategy to engaging in research in which historically, students of color have been objectified and silenced, and in urban areas students are often viewed through deficit lenses (Bertrand, 2018). YPAR provides an opportunity for students to interrogate the notions of privilege and oppression that perpetuates power structures which contributes to the deficit-oriented narratives that are imposed on them and their communities (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017).

According to Caraballo et al. (2017), the earliest YPAR studies were student-led and emerged in response to discrimination, racism, poverty, resource disparities, and the violence experienced by students of color in their schools and communities. This reflects students’ abilities to recognize and form action against structures that perpetuate inequality which is

contrary to the deficit narratives associated with minoritized youth (Milner R. , 2012). Through these deficit narratives, students of color have been framed as the problem rather than leaders in school reform (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). However, scholars have utilized YPAR to expose harmful school environments and reposition students of color as leaders who are capable of influencing reform (Bertrand, 2018; Yonezawa & Jones, 2009). For example, Bertrand (2018) conducted a YPAR study with a group of middle school students who were racially diverse and attending an urban school, in which students had repositioned themselves as agentic, knowledgeable and capable of increased leadership opportunities. These students asserted their insider knowledge regarding the components of school structures that were inhibiting to their success with particular attention to how they were affected per their intersectional identities (Bertrand, 2018). Adults, however, positioned their focus on academic measures, and carried inaccurate and deficit viewpoints of students which had been enforcing harmful power structures (Bertrand, 2018). Bertrand's (2018) study increases our understandings of how centering student voice for knowledge-based inquiry can shed light on the magnitude of issues affecting student's success that adults often minimize.

Other scholars have also utilized YPAR to communicate the significance of student voice on educational reform within urban areas (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017; Yonezawa & Jones, 2009). Warren and Marciano (2018) utilized a YPAR design to position students as co-researchers to affect large-scale, education policymaking in which students were seen as an imperative stakeholder group. They found that the students involved became more vocal and developed agency as co-researchers, increased their sensitivity to cultural differences, and had an elevated interest in taking action to address injustices (Warren & Marciano, 2018). Activating student voice through youth participatory action research (YPAR): Policy making that

strengthens urban education reform, 2018). These students also became aware of how similar oppressive conditions were affecting students at other schools which they were previously unaware of (Warren & Marciano, Activating student voice through youth participatory action research (YPAR): Policy making that strengthens urban education reform, 2018). By influencing student's recognition of acts of oppression and privilege YPAR methodologies aids the development of a critical consciousness for youth. According to Fine (2008), YPAR also teaches students that conditions of injustice are produced and are changeable. As such, research suggests that when students recognize how structures of schooling adversely affects them and their peers' students will be more invested in desiring change (Rubin & Jones, 2007). YPAR serves as a framework for empowering student voice in educational research and equips students with the skills to organize for desired changes. The following section discusses how student voice frameworks in educational leadership applies similar principles.

The Pyramid of Student Voice: A Leadership Framework

Mitra & Gross (2009) presented a pyramid of student voice to describe the ways in which school leaders have utilized student contributions to inform school reform. The first layer of the pyramid is students "being heard" which refers to school personnel listening to students about their experiences in school (Mitra & Gross, 2009). The second level is "collaborating with adults" which refers to students working alongside school personnel to gather data on prevalent issues and implement changes to improve students school experiences (Mitra & Gross, 2009). The third and final level of the pyramid includes "building capacity for leadership" which refers to empowering students to become educational leaders in their schools (Mitra & Gross, 2009). Based on their review of the literature, most recent studies fall within the collaboration level of student voice, whereas empowering students for leadership is the least common form of student

engagement (Mitra & Gross, 2009). Mansfield et. al (2012) added to this framework by including two additional levels on the pyramid. At the very bottom, they added “students as data sources” and at the very top they contributed “undiscovered territory of student voice possibilities” (Mansfield, Welton, & Halx, 2012). This extended pyramid is encompassed in the leadership and pedagogical practices of school leaders which are nested within the socio-cultural context of student’s schools (Mansfield, Welton, & Halx, 2012). This framework is indicative that although scholars possess a generally common understanding of student voice, what counts as speaking *with* rather than *for* students varies. However, this pyramid exposes us to an increased understanding of the utility of student voice within educational reform.

Similar to YPAR, student voice initiatives that have fallen within the categories of this leadership framework have contributed to school reform in impactful ways. Although there is some critique with lower levels of the pyramid, school leaders have reported increased insight on issues related to school structures through the solicitation of student perspectives (Mitra & Gross, 2009). However, using students as data sources without collaboration has been considered a ‘tokenistic’ form of student voice (Mitra D. , 2009). Mitra & Gross (2009) indicate that the most impact on school reform has occurred through student-adult collaboration. Students have staged walkouts, rallied against unjust policies, and influenced curriculum and teaching when partnered with adults (Rubin & Jones, 2007; Zeldin, 2004). Additionally, students and adults have benefitted from the processes of youth-adult collaborations aside from reforming school structures. Students have developed civic skills that are necessary to analyze inequities in their communities, increased participation in their learning, and gained confidence in their abilities to impact change (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017; Radina, et al., 2018). Educators

have increased their learning about teaching and interacting with students through the use of youth-adult collaborations (Mitra & Gross, 2009).

Given the known benefits of youth-adult collaboration, scholars are now increasingly pushing for school leaders to build the leadership capacity of students to further influence reform (Lyons, Brasof, & Baron, 2020). As noted, fewer studies examine student voice initiatives that fall within this category. However, a study by Lyons et. al (2020) utilized a three-dimension capacity building framework to unpack what building students leadership capacity could entail. They emphasized increasing student's personal capacity, described as individual skills; interpersonal capacity, described as student-teacher collaborations to influence school decision's; and organizational capacity, described as increasing student's influence on school structures (Lyons, Brasof, & Baron, 2020). They found that school leaders should focus more on sharing governance structures with students, foster youth-adult relationships that perpetuate a dialogic school culture and allow for the co-planning of curriculum and instruction (Lyons, Brasof, & Baron, 2020). However, in order to foster leadership capacity in students, research suggests that issues of power amongst students, school leaders, and school organizations in urban education need to be further mitigated (Mansfield, Welton, & Halx, 2012).

Student Voice in the Context of this Study

Although the frameworks listed above are not exhaustive, they have made significant contributions to how I conceptualize student voice in this study. This study is particularly concerned with the implications of student voice in the use of school, community, and family partnerships as a school reform strategy. YPAR and the pyramid of student voice demonstrates the possibilities of school reform when students are positioned as collaborators and co-leaders in the process. In centering students' experiential knowledges in reform, researchers, policymakers,

and educators can get away from objective, biased and harmful practices that enable adverse school structures (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017). Unfortunately, student voice within the partnership literature is limited which has motivated me to explore how students make sense of their interactions with partners in their schools. Going into this study I am not assuming that student voice will occur in a particular way. However, based on the frameworks outlined in this section I am confident that in positioning students as contributors to the research process, and in gathering their perceptions of their interactions with SCF partners they will present valuable information to enhance our understandings. Because this study is specifically focused on the use of partnerships in urban areas the following section provides an overview of the context of urban education, then a discussion of SCF partnerships.

The Context of Urban Education

Communities that are considered ‘urban’ often include large groups of racially minoritized people who are experiencing issues related to racial, social, and economic inequities (Milner R. H., 2012). Often, predominantly Black populations are situated within these urban communities. The conditions of urban communities are a result prolonged disinvestment which has been rooted in racist and discriminatory policy implementation that is associated with the confinement of Black and additional racially minoritized groups to specific geographical locations (Sugrue, 2014). As a result of long-term disinvestment, residents are often faced with under-funded schools, limited employment opportunities, and inequitable housing and transportation options (Milner R. H., 2012; Khalifa, 2012). Within education systems, Black, additional racially minoritized groups, and low-income residents are frequently kept out of integral spaces in school organizations and are viewed as problems, as opposed to assets to student’s education (Milner R. , 2012). These groups of people have been victim to political

experimentation, paternalistic leadership, and exclusionary practices perpetuating distrusting relationships between them and educational systems (Fuentes, 2012; Green T. L., 2015; Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). Also, research notes administrators limited engagement with surrounding communities, perpetuation of adverse school cultures, and their broken relationships with families (Khalifa, 2012; Milner, 2012; DeMatthews, 2018; Green & Gooden, 2014). As a result, research examining the conditions of urban schools notes prevalent issues including truancy, underachievement, low-parental involvement, low-funding, and disciplinary problems which are often associated with student-, parent-, and community-placed blame (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Milner R. H., But what is urban education?, 2012; DeMatthews, 2018).

In addition to the challenges noted within urban education, many research studies acknowledge the assets that exists in urban communities (Green T. L., 2015; Yosso, 2005). For example, there is a demonstrated history of Black residents in urban areas who have organized and rallied against unjust social and educational policies (Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007). As such, the use of community-engaged school reform is heavily advocated for amongst critical scholars who acknowledge the capitalistic knowledges and resources that exists in communities of color (Green T. L., 2015; Yosso, 2005). Research, policy, and leadership in urban education cannot only consider in-school contexts when engaging in reform decisions, but also the environments that students are navigating in the surrounding communities (Green & Gooden, 2014). Reform decision's that aim to create change within urban school environments without considering the contexts of students' neighborhoods and communities are likely to be ineffective (Green & Gooden, 2014). The use of SCF partnerships is one example of community-engaged school reform which will be discussed in-depth in the following sections.

School, Community, Family Partnerships in Urban Education

School, community, family partnerships (SCF) partnerships are an important school reform strategy in urban education. School leaders have utilized partnerships to address the inequities that students in urban schools often experience which have had substantial effects on school and community conditions (Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). Also, the use of partnerships is becoming increasingly mandated for schools that are consistently failing on standardized tests and other academic measures. Although the use of partnerships is increasing however, literature is still limited concerning how students perceive them as a mechanism of reform in their schools. As such, this section demonstrates the positive outcomes associated with the use of partnerships as noted by parents, community members and school leaders. More recent literature concerning SCF partnerships in urban education is almost exclusively focused on the pedagogies and practices of school leaders to implement partnerships in urban communities effectively. In order to address the gap in literature concerning student voice, the last section of this review aims to thread together both bodies of research: SCF partnerships and student voice in school reform.

Conceptualizing SCF Partnerships as a School Reform Strategy

Due to the contextual relevance and the active involvement of school and community stakeholders, SCF partnerships are an example of a bottom-up, or community-engaged, school reform strategy (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019; Pazey, Cole, & Spikes, 2017). They are representative of how schools educating racially minoritized students were operated pre-integration and have since been used to combat the effects of harmful, top-down educational policies (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 2009). Top-down reform refers to educational policies that are developed and implemented without the involvement of stakeholders who are representative

of the schools and communities that are to be affected (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). These reform strategies are often reflective of meritocratic myths of success and deficit narratives of urban communities and emphasizes high stakes testing and accountability measures that are decontextualized and colorblind in nature (Milner R., 2012; Pazey, Cole, & Spikes, 2017). In top-down school reform strategies implemented at both, federal and state levels urban schools have been subjected to funding cuts, governance takeovers, and temporary and permanent closures which disproportionately affects low-income, and communities of color (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). SCF partnerships, however, have been utilized reactively to challenge these and other unjust outcomes of top-down school reform. However, scholars have suggested that [*bottom-up/community-engaged*] reform such as partnerships also be utilized as a proactive strategy to structuring urban education (Green T. L., 2018; Gross, et al., 2015; Hordford & Sampson, 2014; Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). Research concerning SCF partnerships, and other community-engaged reform strategies emphasizes that without the engagement of students, parents, and organizations from these communities', schools cannot adequately improve the quality of education for its students (Hordford & Sampson, 2014, Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016).

Therefore, SCF partnerships in this study is understood as the collaborative engagement of schools with families and communities to address mutually agreed upon goals to improve students' school environments (Epstein, 1987; Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). In this conceptualization, 'school' refers to the physical educational buildings that students are attending; and 'family' refers to the direct kin of students who are involved in the partnership which is most often their parents. 'Community' refers to the neighborhoods, structures, institutions, and interactions that exist within a particular geographical location. This location

encompasses divided social spaces; whereas social spaces encompass the assets, rules, traditions, punishments, power dynamics, support, and connections, or cultural spaces that exists among community members (Khalifa, 2012; LeChasseur, 2014).

In the literature, the goals of SCF partnerships are typically related to improving academics, school culture, organizational changes, and community reform (Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). I conceptualize *school centered* SCF partnerships as those that are facilitated according to the goals of pre-existing school organizations. These most often focus on agendas aimed at shaping students to fit traditional school policies and norms as opposed to reshaping school environments to be responsive to the students and communities served. *Student-centered* partnerships then, are those that aim to reshape school environments to be responsive to student's needs, values and experiential knowledges. Considering the disparities in the quality of education most often received by racially minoritized students in urban schools, I am particularly concerned with the use of student-centered SCF partnerships as a school reform strategy due to their demonstrated effectiveness of altering school structures. However, in the following sections I will provide an overview of both categories.

“School-Centered” School, Community, Family Partnerships

School-centered SCF partnerships are those that are developed with parents and communities to meet goals that are as set by the administration of school organizations. In the literature they have been presented as upholding school cultures that perpetuate low-income and communities of color as lacking in social and cultural assets (Milner R. , 2012; Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016; Freidus, 2016; Siegel-Hawley, Thachik, & Bridges, 2016). I critique school-centered partnerships for this reason, arguing for leaders to engage communities to build partnership models that changes the pre-existing organization of schools. School-centered

partnerships often emphasize traditional types of involvement including schools provision of services to families remedying inadequate access to resources; parent meetings and traditional parent-teacher conferences focused on student improvement; and parents ability to volunteer in classrooms and assist in fundraising efforts (Green & Gooden, 2014; Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016; Siegel-Hawley, Thachik, & Bridges, 2016).

As such, school-centered partnerships most often focus on mediating barriers that affects student achievement outcomes according to top-down policy standards (Green & Gooden, 2014; Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). These standards perpetuate deficit narratives of minoritized groups, and parents have reported feeling unsatisfied, experiencing access barriers, and feeling ‘othered’ through these sorts of involvement activities (Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007; Wait, 2016). School-centered partnerships lack an intentional effort to holistically improve the experiences of minoritized students attending urban schools, as they often fail to incorporate their experiential knowledges or values. This section provides a critique of these partnerships as a basis for arguing towards more student-centered models. Considering the absence of student’s perspectives in the SCF partnership literature, the following information was synthesized from prior studies which centered on the experiences of parents, community members, and community-based organizations.

“School-Centered” Partnerships with Parents

In response to unsuccessful top-down policy initiatives, administrators progressively became tasked with increasing parental involvement within their schools with the aim of increasing student achievement. This was in response to the underperformance of students of color and in low-income areas on academic standards, which scholars argued could be mitigated by increased parental involvement regardless of socioeconomic status (Epstein, 1987). Epstein

(1987) presented a synopsis of four types of parental involvement including: the basic obligations of parents; school-to-home connections; parent involvement at school; and parent involvement in learning activities at home. These categories had been derived from prior studies, which centered the efficacy of parent involvement in schools on their backs, requiring few engagement efforts from school leaders (Epstein, 1987).

Subsequent studies began to advance this model by highlighting the multidimensional nature of partnerships due to the mutual influence that schools, parents, and communities have on student's development. Thus, scholarship have shifted from merely focusing on parent involvement to improving school-community connections. Derived from this notion, Epstein (2011) developed the "six types of involvement" framework highlighting the importance of *parenting, communication, volunteerism, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community*, as comprehensively important to student's success. Incorporating these underlining principles school administrators have utilized various forms of partnerships. However, those focused on aligning students with the organization of traditional school environments have ultimately continued to be 'school-centered' as opposed to 'student-centered'.

The components of school-centered partnerships most often align with white, middle-class norms which operates within the bounds of traditional curriculum, policies, and practices of contemporary schooling. Current curriculum and school-based policies and practices are representative of decisions made by entities who are unfamiliar with, and problematizing of the knowledges, values and norms of minoritized groups (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). Ultimately, these have been demonstrated through the imposition of top-down policies which are in conflict with the contextual experiences of racially minoritized groups. This causes students,

parents, and communities of color to feel devalued in their efforts when they do not engage accordingly (Baquedano-Lopez & Hernandez, 2013; DeMatthews, 2018). As such, common across the literature is the emphasis placed on social capital, with much theorizing around social network theory and its relation to successful partnerships. Broadly, the argument is that when school leaders can develop partnerships with parents and community organizations who are able to leverage various sorts of capital then the partnerships become more effective (Siegel-Hawley, Thachik, & Bridges, 2016). However, the capital of value is often unaligned with the assets possessed by families of color in urban areas (Green T. L., 2015; Yosso, 2005).

For example, literature highlights desired forms of capital within school-parent partnerships that includes in-kind donations in the form of time, resources, and money to push the agendas of school leaders (Posey-Maddox L. , 2014; Quarles & Butler, 2018). These agendas are often resisted by minoritized communities; also, this sort of capital is often unavailable in low-income areas. In predominantly white, middle- to upper-class schools this type of engagement is demonstrated as organizing fundraising events, assisting in classrooms, attending field trips, and attending PTA meetings which have become primary indications of the ‘engaged parent’ (Posey-Maddox, Kimelberg, & Cucchiara, 2016; Yosso, 2005). Scholars have noted barriers related to transportation, childcare, and access to employment and non-traditional work hours which automatically isolates some parents due to their inability to contribute in this way (Quarles & Butler, 2018). Considering the attachment of social capital theory to whiteness, attributing the value of partners according to their access to these specific sorts of capital is problematic when administrators in urban schools’ desire to develop partnerships with their students’ families.

According to the arguments of Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, as cited in Yosso, 2005), middle- and upper-class groups in society possess the knowledges that are considered to have capitalistic value considering their progression in social mobility. Arguably, the discourse of “middle- and upper-class” is synonymous with whiteness considering the “income-gap” and “achievement-gap” discourse frequently used to discuss disparities between white and racially minoritized groups (Milner R. , 2012; Venzant Chambers, 2009; Yosso, 2005). Consequently, when parents are not able to leverage the social capital that aligns with traditional middle-class involvement, they are viewed as deficient (Auerbach, 2010; Baquedano-Lopez & Hernandez, 2013; Posey-Maddox, Kimelberg, & Cucchiara, 2016; Yosso, 2005). In addition to these deficit-oriented views of parents, they are also assumed to be uninterested in their children’s education and are blamed for being unable to access disinviting and exclusionary school organizations (Yosso, 2005; Auerbach, 2010; Baquedano-Lopez & Hernandez, 2013). Unfortunately, these deficit-based views of parents are transferred onto their students which affects their educational experiences. Thus, the culture of schools operating from this regard is harmful to students, parents, and community institutions in urban areas and inhibits the development of partnerships with families to reform school environments.

“School-Centered” Partnerships with Community Organizations

In addition to barriers in parental involvement, school-centered models of SCF partnerships have also been challenged due to limited opportunities for the involvement of seminal organizations within communities of color (Green T. L., 2015). Alike with the parameters placed upon parental involvement, school-centered partnerships with community-based organizations most often prioritize those who can support the goals of school organizations as developed by the administration (Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). While possessing the

potential, these partnerships do little to improve the culture of schools to be more responsive to the needs of their students (Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). School-centered partnerships with community-based organizations are most often used to coordinate services which supports the basic needs of students and their families as identified by school personnel. For example, school staff may refer students or their family members to counseling services, health organizations, housing offices, or employment fairs on an as needed basis, or in the form of school-organized events (Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). These partnerships operate on the premise that if students have access to their most basic needs in turn their academic performance will improve.

Understanding that students' access to social and economic resources are important for their success, some components of school centered SCF partnership models are critical. However, they do little to address the racialized schooling conditions that students are subject to across systems of urban education (Green & Gooden, 2014; Khalifa, 2012). Also, this practice of facilitating partnerships upholds the discourse of cultural deficiency regarding communities of color, as the organizations that are critical to their survival are not viewed as viable partners (Green T. L., 2015 & 2018). Communities of color are often perceived as possessing low-opportunity neighborhoods, where it is assumed that students lack community assets to assist in their learning and development (Green T. L., 2015). However, in a study of two perceivably low-opportunity neighborhoods, Green (2015) found that the community actually held a wealth of institutional assets including churches, schools, community centers, hospitals, libraries, and higher educational institutions which counters the narrative that these communities are lacking in viable partners.

In order to improve the efficacy of partnerships with regard to developing more inclusive school environments and reform efforts, leaders must undergo shifts in their understandings of

the makeup of urban communities (Khalifa, 2012; Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019; Green & Gooden, 2014). This includes developing asset-based pedagogies which refers to the recognition of the abilities, capacities, and strengths of individuals and institutions within a given community (Green T. L., 2015; Yosso, 2005; Milner R. , 2012). This asset-based perspective is in complete contradiction to the deficit-oriented narrative that is common in top-down decision-making practices within urban education currently. It is also a fundamental component of engaging in SCF partnerships, and other strategies of bottom-up reform that are reflective of the communities served. In the following section, I discuss a more asset-driven model of SCF partnerships which I have termed *student-centered* models.

“Student-Centered” School, Community, Family Partnerships

This section examines the use of student-centered SCF partnerships as a mechanism for increasing the capacities of school leaders, students, parents, and organizations to create better school environments and influence reform. *Student-centered* partnerships are those who aim to shift school organizations to be more responsive to student’s needs in response to contextual factors. A comprehensive review of the literature has situated these partnerships as advancing the previously discussed model in three ways. First, in shifting from school-centered goals they aim to address the specific needs and aspirations of students while valuing their identities and experiential knowledges (Baquedano-Lopez & Hernandez, 2013; Johnson, 2007; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). Secondly, as opposed to focusing solely on students’ academic achievement they involve efforts to reconstruct entire school organizations as a means of improving students educational experiences (DeMatthews, 2018; Johnson, 2007; Green & Gooden, 2014; Khalifa, 2012). Lastly, they emphasize partnering with parents and community institutions that are situated within the spaces of and are knowledgeable about the context

affecting students. However, the current study aims to advance this model by incorporating student voice as a fundamental component of facilitating student-centered SCF partnerships.

The most commonly discussed difference between school-centered and student-centered partnerships is that the latter emphasizes stakeholder input into aspects of decision making (Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). This model removes the perception that only principals and school officials can be educational leaders by extending opportunities for leadership to families and communities (Lac & Cumings Mansfield, 2018). Some examples of this shared leadership have been in determining budgetary use, hiring, the development of programs, and the enactment or disruption of school-based policies (Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). Successful student-centered partnerships have been demonstrated to effectively disrupt top-down school governance structures, while more comprehensive examples attended to community conditions simultaneously (Green, 2014; Khalifa, 2012; Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). Examples of student-centered partnerships that have addressed community conditions alongside that of schools have included improvements to transportation, employment, health care, and housing challenges (Fuentes, 2012; Gold, Simon, Mundell, & Brown, 2004; Green, 2015; Khalifa 2012; Gold, Simon, Mundell, & Brown, 2004). This success highlights the unique position of school leaders in building partnerships that can increase professional and community capacities for influencing reform.

Other studies exhibiting more comprehensive models of student-centered partnerships has shown how schools have been positioned as organizational brokers which bridged networks of social capital to provide a more comprehensive range of services (Green T. L., 2018). As noted earlier, the use of social network theory is widely discussed in the context SCF partnerships positioning principals as the most befitting of leveraging capital due to their access

to families, communities, and city and state political offices (Green, 2018). However, principals engaging in partnerships from asset-based perspective have been able to work alongside seminal organizations across social and cultural spaces within a given community¹ to enact reform. Green (2018) utilized social capital theory to demonstrate a principal's ability to engage in processes of *bonding* and *bridging* capital across social networks while utilizing a transformative leadership approach, opposite of bureaucratic (DeMatthews, 2018; Green, 2018). Bonding social capital refers to the networks that exist among homogenous groups reinforcing their shared identities (Green, 2018). Bridging refers to connecting social networks across social boundaries, further requiring principals to engage in boundary-spanning engagement within students' communities (Green, 2018). This leader was able to improve school and community conditions with the resources utilized by students within their neighborhoods and detached the credibility of partners from access to white, hegemonic forms of social capital.

As noted, across urban communities where racially minoritized groups reside the relationships that exists between schools and stakeholders are typically damaged as a result of constant marginalization. Therefore, much of the literature within urban educational leadership aims to reposition principal orientations of the communities served in order to implement just and equitable reforms (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). This is reflected in the literature regarding student-centered SCF partnerships, as scholars have charged school leaders with learning to engage communities of color whereas they are the experts of their own lived experiences and possess assets that are valuable to school improvement (Auerbach, 2010; Green

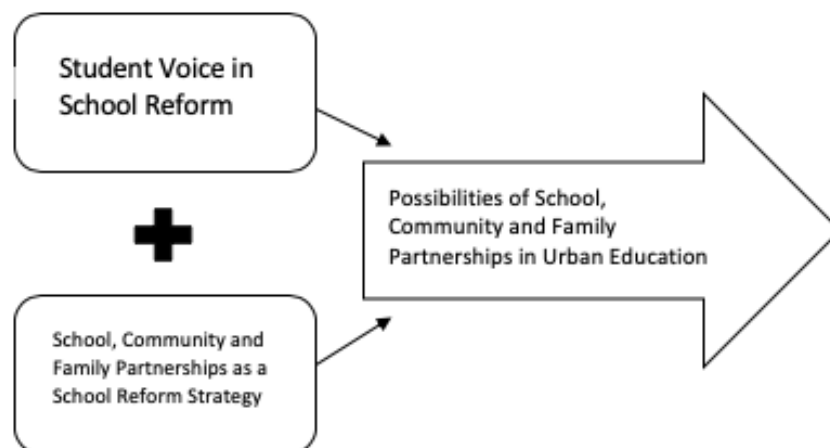
¹ 'Community' refers to the neighborhoods, structures, institutions, and interactions that exist within a particular geographical location. This location encompasses divided social spaces; whereas social spaces encompass the assets, rules, traditions, punishments, power dynamics, support, and connections, or cultural spaces that exists among community members (Khalifa, 2012; LeChasseur, 2014).

T. L., 2018; Gross, et al., 2015; Johnson, 2007; Khalifa, 2012). Consequently, much of the recent literature that demonstrates successful student-centered partnerships emphasizes the criticality of the actions of school leaders as opposed to that of students, parents, and community organizations.

While the actions of school leaders and other adult stakeholders are important, student voice also represents a critical perspective to understanding how to effectively utilize SCF partnerships as a school reform strategy. As such, it is my intent to emphasize student voices in this study to address this gap in the literature. The following section aims to communicate how this review of the literature, regarding SCF partnerships and student voice in school reform, has informed the components of this dissertation study.

Conceptual Framework: Student Voice and SCF Partnerships

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



This framework represents how I have conceptualized the inclusion of student voice within the implementation of SCF partnerships to improve their effectiveness as a school reform strategy. I combine the concepts of *student voice* in school reform, with the use of *partnerships* as a strategy of reform with an intent to understand how if utilized together they can push our

understanding regarding the possibilities of partnerships in urban education. SCF partnerships have been used addressed several issues in urban schools and communities and have been utilized far longer than student voice has been advocated for in the context of school reform. However, student voice and the use of partnerships have separately contributed significant impacts to school reform in urban education.

As indicated by the aforementioned frameworks centering student voice in educational leadership and research, students are not passively navigating their school environments and are capable to contributing to school reform to improve them and their classmates' experiences (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017; Mitra & Gross, 2009). When positioned as intellectual beings, knowledge producers, collaborators and co-leaders in school reform processes students have contributed to impactful, sustainable and contextually appropriate changes (Bertrand, 2018). However, when acted *upon* through school reform decision's students have resisted oppressive environments and have experienced barriers to being successful (Pazey, Cole, & Spikes, 2017). This is indicative of the differences between students and adults when determining what challenges are present that contribute to student's underperformance and disengagement in their education.

As partnerships are being utilized, additional stakeholders are entering students' schools and shaping their education without consulting students regarding desired changes. Without consulting students, we are unaware of how they perceive partnerships to be affecting their school experiences or to what extent their needs are being addressed. The literature that highlights the benefits of partnerships are in the voices of adults, which is a practice that the literature regarding student voice and school reform more broadly critiques (Mansfield, Welton, & Halx, 2012; Mitra D., 2009; Yonezawa & Jones, 2009). Without centering students voices we

cannot be sure if they are benefitting from existing partnerships as adults assume. Further, given the successes of both, student-led and student-adult initiatives in school reform, the inclusion of student's voices possesses the potential to reshape our understandings of the utility of partnerships more broadly (Mittra & Gross, 2009).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Research Questions

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology for this qualitative, phenomenological study concerning the significance of Black students' voices in the implementation of school, community, and family (SCF) partnerships. Community Schools Connection (CSC) partnered with Lake High School (LHS) to help improve student's success in academics, behavior, and coursework. CSC worked most closely with students whose families were considered low-income, and who needed assistance acquiring basic needs. These students were a part of their Case Management Program, and all the students who participated in this study were actively enrolled in the program upon the time of their interviews. In this study, I sought to understand how this sample of students were perceiving their interactions with CSC's coordinators, and what meaning their involvement had contributed to students learning experiences. I choose to utilize a qualitative and phenomenological research approaches in with the intent to learn of the contextual influences that shaped students' perceptions, and to present profound descriptions of their experiences. During data analysis, I examined the interviews and group sessions using a Black critical epistemology. I developed the following research questions for guidance:

1. How do Black students make meaning of their experiences with an urban, school-community partnership occurring in their urban school?
2. What organizational structures contributes to students' perceptions with the school-community partnership?

This chapter begins by providing necessary context of CSC and LHS, followed by a discussion of my chosen research methodologies. I then introduce the participants of the study

and discuss sources of data, analytical strategies, researcher positionality and trustworthiness. This chapter concludes with a summary of the stated information.

The Community Schools Connection-Lake High School Partnership

Background and Context of Lake High School

Lake High School educates a predominantly Black student demographic and is situated in a majority Black, urban city within Michigan. The city where LHS is situated, Lake City, is 51% Black, 39% white, 17.7% as Hispanic/Latinx, 6% as multiracial and < 3% of Asian-Pacific Islander, Native American, and other races. Lake City also has a poverty rate of 31.9%, where 30% of Black families identify as living below the poverty line. According to documents provided by CSC and Lake HS homelessness, food insecurity, health care, incarceration and limited services for immigrant families are present, critical issues for Lake City's residents. Within the realm of education, there are limited educational options for students who are unable to access school choice options or preference public schooling.

As of 2009, Lake HS is the only public high school in the district due to the forced consolidation of two others. As of 2017, Lake HS's school district became categorized as a 'partnership' district through the Michigan Department of Education due to low performance on standardized academic measures. During the 2020-2021 school year the district reported having 11 public schools and serving 4,175 students. The school district's enrollment of students of color is approximately 92%, which is more than the state average of 34%. Most of the school district's student population identify as Black comprising of 52%, while 32% identify as Hispanic and 8% as white. Regarding socio-economic status, the district reports that 87% of students come from families who are considered low-income. LHS has a student population of 647 students in which 56.9% identify as Black, 35.4% identify as Hispanic, 4.2% identify as

white, and 3.5% identify as Asian-Pacific Islander. 77% of Lake HS's students come from families who identify as low-income.

Given that Lake HS is categorized as a partnership district, the State of Michigan has mandated that they collaborate with family and community stakeholders to address students' needs with the intent of improving on their academic measures. Per their agreement, the superintendent has initiated partnerships with several institutions including a local university and community college, a research and reform institute, the Department of Health and Human Services, local churches, foundations, and businesses to increase their access to resources for students. However, Community Schools Connection is the only organization that provided daily direct services to students and existed as an internal entity of Lake HS. At the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year CSC worked with LHS's staff to conduct an assessment and identify basic needs that students and their families had limited access to and that were adversely affecting student's ability to succeed. They identified childcare, clothing, crisis intervention, housing, food, legal services, school supplies and transportation as most needed.

Through their theory of change, CSC fostered relationships with students and their families to identify their level of need and connect them with appropriate local resources. CSC's engagement with student's families also played a role in fostering school-parent relationships to reshape the perceptions of Lake HS's staff regarding low family engagement. This perception is despite data from Lake HS's students stating that parents do engage in their education. Ultimately, this misperception of parents, as well as of students and the Lake City community is a result of an adverse school culture at Lake HS which CSC also attempted to improve through their services.

Community Schools Connection

Community Schools Connection (CSC) of Michigan is an affiliate of a national non-profit organization that partners with schools whose students struggle with academic and home-related challenges. Their goal is to bridge schools, families, and their surrounding communities to enrich student's educational experiences where their home and school related challenges are not seen as separate. Accordingly, they aim to increase the capacities of schools where teachers and additional educators do not 'have to do it all'. Their organization engages in this work through a theory of change that emphasizes the development of healthy caring relationships, social-emotional and academic skills, and improvement in academics, behavior, and coursework. In their theory of change they suggest that the development of these skills will contribute to the following outcomes amongst students: 1) a reduction of dropout rates; 2) increased graduation rates; and 3) increased college and career readiness, and civic engagement. Relationship building with students through caring adults is most fundamental to the success of CSC's theory of change, where they feel it is the most instrumental tool to build necessary connections for students' success.

CSCs theory of change is carried out through a circular model that incorporates six phases of implementation and has three tiers of supports. To carry out this model, CSC hires site coordinators who enter schools and act as a liaison between the school and local community institutions. Site coordinators are selected based on school demographics and needs, and suitability to encourage a culturally responsive approach. Site coordinators then lead the six-step model which includes: 1) a *needs assessment* that assess the needs of entire school organizations in relation to academics, behavior, and coursework by interacting with students, parents and school staff; 2) *planning* which occurs with the school support team, and refers to developing a

plan and identifying potential partners to support identified needs; 3) *integrated student supports* which works with a caseload of individual students through a case management program; 4) *monitor and adjustment* refers to a continuous reassessment of needs and outcomes based on the developed support plan and adjusting as necessary; 5) *evaluation* captures data regarding proven success and areas of growth in school and student support plans; lastly, 6) documentation of *proven success*. The three tiers of support that CSC provides are: 1) school-wide services; 2) targeted programs for groups of students sharing a common need; and 3) individualized supports students on their case management caseload.

The students who participated in this study were a part of the case management program provide by CSC, which could support 25 students for the 2020-2021 school year. This means that these students were receiving individualized supports in addition to school-wide and targeted supports. In addition to student's participation in these support services, they also engaged in personalized goal setting with the CSC site coordinator and support team. Given the intricacy of CSC's involvement with students who were on their case management caseload they built substantial relationships with them and their families which they anticipated would improve students school and home related barriers to their educational success. Further, given CSC's goal of bridging school and community connections they also anticipated improving school culture and climate to be more responsive to students, families, and community members.

Research Methodologies and Rationale

The decolonialization of 'what is considered knowledge' along social, cultural, and political lines was emphasized in this study given the perpetual marginalization of the knowledges of Black students within traditional structures of education. To achieve this, I crafted this study's design with the following intent: 1) to provide a space for students to contribute to

research and practice regarding school, community and family partnerships in their schools; 2) to co-construct a space with students where they could dialogue with peers about their experiences freely, and without judgement or ridicule in hopes that I could authentically capture their perspectives; 3) to help students critique unfavorable learning conditions, and hear their collective ideas about the use of SCF partnerships in their schools given their educational goals. These goals were derived out of my stated research questions and were helpful when deciding upon appropriate research methods and a methodology. I will reflect on how I drew connections between the chosen research methodology and these goals in this section.

The chosen research design is reflective of qualitative, phenomenological methodologies. Qualitative research is centered of the notion that ‘meaning’ is socially constructed per the experiences and interactions that individuals encounter in the world. These interactions cut across social, cultural, and political lines where contextual factors play a major role in researchers and participants constructions of reality (Merriam, 2002; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenological research designs are also highly attentive to the contextual factors affecting the experiences of individuals. Phenomenological research centers on diverse conceptions of reality from individuals who have encountered a shared phenomenon, with a goal to “gain a profound understanding of a *human experience* common to a group of people” (Merriam, 2002; Padilla-Diaz, 2015, p. 104). Further, its intended use is to uncover a universal essence, or a clear and accurate description of a shared experience amongst a group of individuals (Ganeson & Ehrich, 2009; Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Qualitative, phenomenological research is asserted to be a rigorous and non-reductionist frame for studying human experiential and behavioral phenomena (Giorgi, 2012). Scholars have also noted the potential of this methodology to decolonize what

counts as knowledge regarding human experiences in scientific research (Ganeson & Ehrich, 2009; Padilla-Diaz, 2015).

Foremost, given that Black students voices are limited in the literature, the contribution to research and practice that I intended to make needed to be contextually relevant. Therefore, I choose qualitative methods because of they are beneficial to understanding the lived experiences of individuals and groups (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By using qualitative methods, I was able to employ a diverse set of strategies including dialogue, storytelling, and pen-to-paper activities to engage with students and help them to contribute contextually rich descriptions about their experiences. Students were able to identify aspects of their school environments that they saw as barriers to their success, and challenge things they thought were unfair or that they desired to change. This is a strength of utilizing qualitative research, where participants can provide counter insights to dominant narratives.

Considering that students experience with partnerships are an underexplored phenomenon, I also decided to use a phenomenological approach (Merriam, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Students' voices are discounted in SCF partnership literature which prompted me to understand how they were experiencing partnerships, and of a shared meaning that the partnership's involvement had on their schooling experiences given the frequent advocacy of partnerships as a reform method. I not only wanted to know 'what' students were experiencing, but also 'how' they were experiencing it. This attention to processes that influence participant's experiences is also a central component of phenomenological research. Given that I ultimately hoped to push our conceptualization of partnerships, I aimed to understand what about these partnerships were enriching the experiences of students, if they were even doing so. Phenomenology removes researcher's assumptions about a phenomenon, in

which I wanted to design a study where students could contribute knowledge even if SCF partnerships were not providing the support they needed to disrupt adverse schooling experiences.

Research Design

Study's Participants

Student Participants

In phenomenological research, it is imperative to recruit participants that have directly experienced the phenomenon being examined therefore it is necessary to utilize purposive sampling (Merriam, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Ganeson & Ehrich, 2009). When I began to design my dissertation study, my initial communication was with the CSC organization and they assisted me to conduct this study, including recruiting participants. This is because all communication with students was required to be conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The CSC coordinator and I engaged in a purposive sampling strategy where she referred me students who she felt would commit to the duration of the study's activities.

The sole criteria for participation were that students needed to be involved in CSC's case management program for the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school year, although all the students indicated that they were involved with CSC for additional academic years. The student participants who were selected were majority Black although this was not a requirement in the initial selection criteria. I also spoke with one student participant who identified as white. I choose to illuminate the voices of Black student participants given their explicated experiences which were consistent with existing research that professes a need for improved educational environments for Black students in urban schools. I introduce each student below in hopes that these descriptions contribute to a humanizing envisioning of them. In their interviews students

shared some of their interests and leadership traits which I paired with snapshots of their personalities and contributions to our group spaces to form their introductions.

Savy. Savy is a 15-year-old Black young lady who is in the 10th grade and has attended Lake HS since she was an 8th grader. Savy considers herself a bookworm and loves to read thriller books. When we were speaking for our first interview it was Christmas season and she explained to me that her favorite holiday movie is *Nightmare Before Christmas* which she enjoyed watching with her 5-year-old sister. She also showed me a ‘Jack Skellington’ tree that her and her family had decorated. In our group sessions, Savy was often quiet until she felt that things strongly resonated then she would assertively speak up and give amazing ideas of leadership and how to reshape things for students at Lake HS. Savy cares a lot about mental health and helping people who are being bullied.

James. James is a 10th grader at Lake HS who had turned 16-years-old during this study. He identifies as being mixed with Black and white and has eight siblings in which he is the oldest in the house. James have had a lot of involvement at Lake HS including sports and drumline where he proudly detailed to me his experience playing in Lake HS’s pep rallies. James is friendly and a leader. In our group sessions he took the time to learn the other students’ names and frequently volunteered to present on his activities first. He is often critical of himself, however. James has amazing ideas for improving Lake HS including a desire for more ‘hands-on’ science experiments and opportunities for student’s self-expression. He views leadership as doing the right thing and feels that he is the strongest leader when he is showing his younger brothers how to make the right choices.

Devin. Devin is a 16-year-old 11th grader at Lake HS who identifies as a Black woman with pronouns she/her/hers. Devin is an activist, a tutor to her peers during the pandemic, and is

very empowering to herself and those she interacts with. She has found community with two groups at Lake HS where she has marched for cancer awareness and against gun violence in her communities, and the other which centers girl's self-awareness and self-esteem. She uses the skills she has learned here and in her life experiences to help others and frequently referred to the importance of 'being happy' and 'loving ourselves' in all of our conversations. Ultimately, she wants to help her community so she has career goals of being a cardiologist or detective because she could either save someone's life or help them solve a problem. Last year, Devin sang the National Anthem at an assembly of her peers at Lake HS.

Jac. Jac is an 11th grader at Lake HS who has also attended since 9th grade. She is 16 years old and identifies as a Black young woman. Jac is an athlete and plays volleyball and runs track, then basketball when they are on season. Sports is a motivator for Jac to stay positive and do well in school. Jac has a lot of great ideas to reshape Lake HS and has a goal of being a social worker so she can help students with some of the challenges she sees her peers battling there. Jac explained that she has the potential to be a great leader, although she is a leader in her school currently. Jac defines leadership as standing up for yourself, doing right instead of wrong, helping others make good decisions, and leading by example while also 'spreading out' and helping others become leaders too. In our conversations Jac kept it 'real' in that she was not shy in discussing the things she needed from her school, teachers, and other adults in the building.

Adult Participants

Adult interviews were added to lend technical knowledge to the LHS's organizational structures. I was particularly interested in interviewing adult actors of the CSC-LHS partnership to gain knowledge about the organizational structures that students would have no formal knowledge of. Adult interviews were not used to validate the voices of the student participants.

Adult participants included the two, central actors who facilitated the CSC-LHS partnership. Ms. Sadie is a CSC coordinator and Ms. Sunshine is LHS's permanent social worker. Given that I worked with Ms. Sadie from the start of the study's formation I did not have to engage in recruitment activities with her. I emailed Ms. Sunshine requesting her participation after Ms. Sadie had indicated that she would be the staff member of LHS who would be able to contribute the most knowledge about the partnership in relation to larger organizational structures.

Ms. Sadie. Ms. Sadie was a CSC site coordinator at LHS but has since been promoted to a program director position. She had been with the organization for just under two year and have built a genuine relationship with LHS's students, parents, teachers, and additional staff. Ms. Sadie has an educational background in Special Education and Education Policy/Management, and she was a math teacher for some time prior to working for CSC. Given her background, Ms. Sadie has a love and knowledge base multiple aspects of schooling structures. She is very supportive of student's voice and works intentionally to humanize them in her engagement. Ms. Sadie also works diligently to engage parents and community members to best support students based on their individual needs.

Ms. Sunshine. Ms. Sunshine is the formal social worker for LHS and identifies as an African American woman. She works most directly with CSC as a member of LHS's school environment. She takes a holistic approach to working with students and values the role of social-emotional development to their learning. When I spoke with Ms. Sunshine, I recall thinking that the name was fitting. She is a kind-spirited, loving person with a bright personality. Ms. Sunshine possesses genuine, strong relationships with the students and families that she works with. She and Ms. Sadie work often together and she feel that they complement the work

of each other. Ms. Sunshine supports the use of student voice at LHS and believes that if they can build together then they can effectively affect change at LHS.

Sources of Data

To answer my research questions, I utilized multiple sources of data collection including one individual interview per participant, two student group sessions, and document analysis. All interviews and groups sessions were conducted via Google Meets. Data collection was structured where one phase informed the next. The first phase included document analysis of various documents provided by CSC to gather a sense of the needs of the students who were participating in their case management program, and to help me understand the type of services they offered. Phase two included individual interviews with students about their experiences which lasted for 60-75 minutes. Phase three included group sessions with students where we utilized a dialogue format to unpack the meaning that students made of their interactions with their experiences and utilized several engagement activities to help students have more profound conversations. Phase four, the final phase, included interviews with adult actors to gain a sense of CSC's and LHS's organizational structures that were influencing students' responses. I discuss each phase in more depth in the following sections. In *Table 3.1*, I provide a summary of the data sources. In *Table 3.2*, I show the association of my research questions, stated problems and the following data collection phases as they accompanied each other.

Table 1. Summary of Data Sources

Phase/Data Source	Timeline	Frequency
Phase 1: Document Analysis	November 2020	Several documents
Phase 2: Students' Individual Interviews	December 2020-January 2021	5 (1 individual interview per participant)
Phase 3: Group Sessions	January 2021-February 2021	2 (whole group)
Phase 4: Adults' Individual Interviews	February 2021	2 (1 per participant)

Phase 1: Document Analysis

I conducted an analysis of several documents that were provided by CSC prior to interviewing students. These included CSC's site coordinator training schedules and PowerPoint materials, their needs assessment which was conducted for LHS at the start of the 2020-2021 school year, and their support plan to address the stated needs. In a meeting with CSC's deputy director, I acted as a site coordinator who was attending a training session in order to enter into a school and conduct the work of the organization.

Phase 2: Student Interviews

I utilized my conceptual framework and research questions to construct student's interview protocols. Semi-structured interviews were the primary source of data collection in this study as they grounded the construction of each of the following phases. Each student participated in an individual interview of at least 60-minutes where I asked questions to get to know them as it relates to their personal interests, hobbies, and goals, their favorite things about school, context about their home and community lives, and holiday plans given the time of year. However, the overall reason for the interviews was to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences with the CSC partnership in their school. These conversations included broad questions about students' sense of LHS's culture and their understandings of what CSC does at LHS. Additionally, I asked about their relationships with CSC's coordinators, the type of support they provide to students, pros and cons of their relationships, CSC's potential impact on school culture, and things that could be improved about CSC's work and LHS in general in hopes that they would problematize aspects of CSC and LHS that were not ideal for them. For example, students were asked if given the opportunity, how they would reshape the focus of the CSC-LHS

partnership and if they would have their services at all. This allowed students to pinpoint areas of need in LHS's environment that was most salient to them and discuss how given their experience, CSC could—or could not—improve additional areas of LHS.

These conversations were informal and in all their interviews I felt that students and I were able to build a rapport where they felt comfortable providing me with honest, and sometimes sensitive information. To keep students engaged given the virtual format I incorporated some questions that utilized storytelling. Not only did this provide an opportunity for deeper engagement with students, but storytelling can be a liberating form of communication for research participants (Coles, 2020). For example, I asked students to 'tell me story that gives me an understanding of their relationship with CSC' amongst similar questions. By asking students to communicate stories about their involvement they were able to share with me their envisioning of the operationalization of CSC's role in their school experiences. It also gave me an understanding of what components of their engagement students saw as significant versus that of CSC's coordinators given what I had learned in phase one.

In structuring interview protocols, it was my intent to align the questions with the three tenets of traditional phenomenological data collection. These include developing trust and comfort, gathering details of the experience, and meaning making. While there were a few questions tailored toward meaning making in the interviews, the group sessions in phase three were intended to gain deeper understandings of the meaning students' involvement with CSC had on their experiences. However, their individual interviews did preface that conversation by asking students questions such as 'if [CSC] were not at LHS, how do you think would your experience be different' followed by probes. These questions were intended to help students

construct meaning around their experiences which all of them did. Their responses were used to craft protocols for the group interview sessions.

Phase 3: Group Sessions

The purpose of these group sessions was to provide a space for students to collectively engage in meaning making about their experiences with the CSC partnership. To facilitate these sessions, I utilized strategies included in Bertrand's (2014) practice of reciprocal dialogue. Reciprocal dialogue refers to "interactions in which participants build on each other's words" where a group of participants can discuss and make meaning of a particular topic (Bertrand, Reciprocal dialogue between educational decision makers and students of color: Opportunities and obstacles, 2014, p. 812). Dialogue engages in a collaborative form of communication aimed at uncovering a shared understanding of a particular topic and requires all participants to listen generously to the perspectives of others with the aim of understanding and not challenging each other's perspectives (Kaplowitz, 2018). To set the space, the students and I began session one with setting community agreements that were aimed towards creating a respectful, nonjudgmental group where students could freely express themselves without consequence. I began by presenting five agreements and students began adding their own. We ended up with 12 agreements which students abided by in each session. These seemingly made students more comfortable expressing themselves and students often corrected themselves if they accidentally broke an agreement.

Each session began with an icebreaker activity that required students to affirm an aspect of themselves. These included speaking out loud about their favorite qualities of themselves, leadership traits, and a superpower they would use to make the world better. Following, students completed warm up activities that prefaced our conversations for the day. These required

students to reflect utilizing pen-to-paper creative activities. They would then present these to the entire group and the dialogue would build off these. For example, in the first focus group students were to either draw or write a song, poem, speech or journal about a meaningful experience that they could recall with Ms. Sadie. They then were asked about the meaning of the experience and students naturally followed if they had reflected on something similar. I joined into the conversation to redirect if students had nothing else to contribute and restart the conversation. In addition to pen-to-paper activities, others included storytelling, creating word collages on Google's Jam Board app, and a text poll attempt which had proven to be difficult in our virtual format. However, the diverse use of reflection activities helped students to remain engaged and build upon each other's meaning making regarding their experiences.

Phase 4: Adult Interviews

The fourth phase of data collection included interviews with Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine who were the adult actors that facilitated the partnership. My original intent was to interview the school principal, but Ms. Sunshine was the LHS staff member who most closely worked with the partnership. The purpose of these interviews was to gather information about LHS's organizational structures that were influencing students' experiences with CSC. I asked questions related to LHS's decision making, staff receptiveness to CSC's involvement, data gathering and support plan execution, normative student-adult relationships, and CSC's contributions in LHS. The interview questions that were asked to Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine varied given their different positions however, both interviews were semi-structured which allowed for profound conversations. These interviews lasted 60-80-minutes in length.

Table 2. Associated Research Questions, Stated Problems and Data Collection Phases

<i>Research Questions</i>	<i>2Related Research Problem</i>	<i>Data Collection Phase</i>
What does students' experiences with an urban, school-community partnership contribute to our understandings of the utility of SCF partnerships in urban education?	1, 2	2, 3
What organizational components and adult actions contributed students' perceptions of their experiences with a school-community partnership in an urban school?	1	1, 4

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an iterative, on-going process and was coded utilizing inductive and deductive strategies. Upon the completion of each interview and group session transcripts were transcribed utilizing Rev, an online transcription service. I then downloaded transcripts and uploaded all documents into MAXQDA as they were received and coded the data there. Phase one was analyzed using inductive strategies as it was my first look into the CSC-LHS partnership. Phases two and three were coded utilizing normative phenomenological analytical strategies which are inductive in nature. Given that these were the primary data sources from which I wanted to uncover a common meaning of students' experiences with the CSC-LHS partnership, the use of phenomenological analytical strategies was most fitting. Adult interview data was used to communicate about structures that influenced students' responses, so they were coded utilizing deductive strategies. The deductive codes were derived from the analysis of students' data. This section provides detail of each phase of analysis.

2 Problem 1: Without the presence of students' voices, critical perspectives are missing from the SCF partnership literature that can inform our understandings of their utility.

Problem 2: By excluding student input, we are unaware of how efficacious existing partnerships are at mitigating the issues that they intend to address.

Documents. Documents were coded first using inductive strategies. The codes were broad as I was trying to gain a bird's eye view of LHS's culture as perceived by CSC considering that this document informed their school-wide support plan. For example, the common codes were 'deficit perspectives', 'distrusting relationships', and 'social support' indicating a need for improvement in LHS's culture.

Student Interviews and Group Sessions. Student interviews were coded utilizing phenomenological strategies which includes bracketing, identifying common meaning, horizontalization, and textual and structural analysis (Giorgi, 2012). Before beginning the coding process, I read through each individual interview transcript in entirety and wrote an initial memo that discussed major thoughts from each transcript. This occurred shortly after each interview was conducted. I then went back through each individual interview and began to highlight significant statements made by students regarding their experiences. I assigned inductive codes to these statements as I read through the transcripts which is the process of horizontalization. At the end of each, I also created a coding memo with new thoughts and refined reflections from the first coding memo. These were more in detail as I began to pose questions about emergent findings. Often, these questions included wonderings about the significance of student voice for SCF partnerships based on students' experiences and of broader systemic barriers that were presenting themselves and grounded the need for partnerships at LHS. In the third and final round of analysis of student's individual interviews I focused more on textual and structural analysis of their interviews. During this phase I listened to students' emotional expressions and emphasis significant experiences. I wanted to lend attention to how these experiences were affecting students in relation to their lived context. For example, Gabby would speak more

loudly and firmly when I asked about certain experiences which I interpreted as her emphasizing the significance of that interaction with CSC.

The analysis of students group sessions underwent a very similar process. However, this analysis did not begin until after I conducted roughly two rounds of coding for the individual interviews. This was because the interviews informed the construction of the group sessions. I based some of the protocol questions and activities off what students were discussing in their interviews. In this way, I was not repeating the same questions and was pushing students to expand on what had been discussed prior. Group sessions underwent the bracketing process of reading over entire transcripts then re-reading and highlighting significant statements. I then began to assign codes to the transcripts. Some of which were pre-existing from coding interviews, and some were created as I went through the analysis. Interview and group session data were viewed as complimenting one another so codes were used across both phases as appropriate. In each phase of coding for the group sessions I also recorded memos that contained my thoughts about emergent findings, how these were expanding on individual interview data, notes about group dynamics, and wonderings about implications. Interviews and group sessions ultimately underwent four rounds of coding and I decided upon four themes which are discussed in chapter four.

Adult Interviews. Adult interviews were deductively coded. Since this data was used to provide organizational context to student's experiences, I analyzed this data in a way that spoke back to students' emergent findings. The codes were the four larger themes that I discuss in chapter four. Adult findings, however, are presented in chapter five. Their interviews were not coded until the completion of analysis for student data. In part, this was because student data informed the protocols for the adults and because of timing. These interviews were completed

roughly two weeks after I had collected all the student data. I coded adult interviews in two rounds of analysis and wrote memos at the end of each round. Analytic memos discussed how I interpreted adult's findings in relation to students' experiences.

Black Critical Epistemology

A Black critical epistemology (BCE) was used in the analysis of all phases of data. In student interviews, I inductively coded the data using a BCE to identify the structural components of LHS and CSC that shaped students' experiences. In adult interviews, I searched for statements that spoke to students experiences to understand how CSC perpetuated or contradicted anti-Black school conditions for the students they intended to serve. In each round of analysis, I kept close to the data by centering on the question of '*what contributions about the CSC-LHS partnership are students making that challenges (or critiques) normative Eurocentric epistemologies?*'. Engaging with the data from this entry point helped me to provide a critique of LHS's and CSC's structural components, and to question the efficacy of CSC to improve students' experiences beyond micro-level interactions. Employing a BCE lens allowed me to examine the data from a systemic perspective as Black students' educational experiences are a result of systemic oppression. I was able to remain grounded with the study's purpose by searching the data for instances when CSC worked to challenge the structural components of LHS that created students' experiences which would indicate attention to the role of race in LHS's organization. Otherwise, BCE led me to conclude that the partnership might be reinforcing anti-Black educational conditions. In the following table I provide examples of the nature of significant statements that assisted me to make meaning of the data using a BCE lens.

Table 3. Data Analysis using BCE

<i>Source of Data</i>	<i>Examples of Significant Statements</i>
Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural inequities that created a need for CSC's engagement in LHS • Deficit language of students and families indicating placed blame by LHS staff • CSC's stated goals based on assessments
Student Interviews and Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normative conditions of Black schools • Students' explanations of the root causes of educational inequities & identification of issues • Students shared reimagining/desired changes of LHS
Adult Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contradiction and affirmation of explanations of identified inequities • Explanations of LHS structural components as aligned (or not) with eurocentrism • Validation of Black students' knowledges to shape decision at LHS

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to common standards for evaluation according to four categories as developed by Guba (1981). These four criteria include—*credibility* referring to internal validity, *transferability* referring to generalizability, *dependability* referring to reliability, and *confirmability* referring to objectivity (Shenton, 2004). This section will discuss how I ensured the trustworthiness of this qualitative study accordingly.

Credibility. Credibility refers to the extent that the study tested the measures that it I intended it to and the congruency of the findings to reality (Merriam, 1998). The development of familiarity with the culture of CSC and LHS so that I could draw accurate conclusions was the first step that I took towards ensuring credibility. Shenton (2004) states that this can be established by immersing oneself in appropriate documents or through site visits. Since I could

not have site visits at LHS or CSC, I reviewed the requested documents and conducted online searches to gain an understanding of LHS's context. My search online included MDE's partnership agreement, the districts website and school athletic and academic records, and a search into the history of the district and the city. All of this helped me to gain a sense of the context students were interacting within at LHS.

I also utilized triangulation strategies. In collecting data from documents, students, and adults it was my intent to gain a thorough understanding of the context of LHS, CSC and students backgrounds. Therefore, each individual interview began with some 'get to know you' questions with students and I also shared information where appropriate to build rapport and not make students feel as if our conversation was one sided. I used a similar practice in the group sessions which helped me to gain a better sense of the experiential knowledges that they were bringing into our conversations Adding the adult interviews was for the purpose of providing additional context of LHS for context regarding formal structures.

Given the profound amount of data that I collected from participants it was also important that I engage in member checks. Because this study was conducted virtually and scheduling presented some challenges, I completed this process with students in a group setting. I did not indicate who communicated what to me out of a desire to be discrete with information that they might not want attached to them. Instead, I summarized key information, presented it to students and asked if anyone felt that they had communicated something to me that was not included or if they wanted to add any other thoughts. I also provided my email address and opened the chat box on Google Meets for students to privately send me any feedback. Although not ideal, this was the extent to which I could engage in member checking with students given the conditions of scheduling their interviews. All student contact had to be scheduled via Google Meets on CSC's

account and a CSC coordinator had to be present. We agreed that the CSC coordinator would mute her microphone, turn her video off and not listen to the conversations. She and I both communicated this to students at the start of each session. From my interpretation, students gave honest answers to the interview questions although I cannot be sure if their responses were affected knowing that the CSC coordinator could potentially hear them. Adults were also offered an opportunity to review what was found from their interviews but declined.

The last credibility strategy that I will note is the use of reflective memos. After each interview was conducted and after each round of analysis, I created memos which included a critical reflection, summary of emergent findings, questions, and additional thoughts.

Dependability and Transferability. Dependability refers to the repetition of work in the same context, with the same methods, and same participants to achieve the same results (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). However, contexts of organizations and people change with time and circumstances making this a difficult aspect to ensure. Similarly, transferability refers to the findings and implications of study to be applied to comparable settings (Guba, 1981). Shenton (2004) noted that research processes should be covered in enough detail that it should serve as a prototype in case a researcher were to repeat it, even though the same results may not be produced. Also, the description should be profound enough to enable transferability (Shenton, 2004). As I was writing the final explanation of this dissertation study, I was intentional to provide sufficient detail about my research methods and the setting where this study took place. While students' experiences in urban schools are not homogenous, I hope that with the detail provided in this chapter researchers feel agentive to conduct similar studies and expand upon the research findings (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to ensuring that research findings are aligned with participants experiences or ideas (Shenton, 204). Here triangulation and member checks are imperative. As noted, I engaged in triangulation of the data by collecting and analyzing interviews, group sessions, and documents. Member checks with participants were also practiced ensuring that students voices were accurately represented.

Researcher Positionality

I entered this study as an outsider to LHS and CSC with the goal of centering students voices to understand the utility and efficacy of the CSC-LHS partnership, and to gather the partnership's meaning on students' schooling experiences. I am positioned as a researcher who has no pre-existing knowledge of the organization, norms or culture that comprises LHS, or Lake City. However, I also entered this study as a Black woman from Detroit, a Michigan city with a similar dominant racial, social, and cultural demographic as Lake City. I am a researcher and educator in urban education, with a K-12 educational background from under-resourced and hostile school environments. As a professional, the bulk of my work has been through school-community partnerships where I was employed through non-profit organizations to enter school environments and work towards mitigating a particular issue. Therefore, I feel that I bring a wealth of experiential knowledge that helped me to ethically conduct this study.

Given my identity as a Black woman, I feel that it helped me to build almost instant connections with many of the participants in this study. Black girls in particular often said things like 'you know how its is' and similar statements when discussing certain issues, they encountered at LHS. We also connected about tv shows, trends and hair styles in casual conversation upon them entering the call. However, I was also cautious to not assume that rapport would be built solely off my identity. Being that I was introduced as a graduate student

attending Michigan State University by the CSC coordinator in each interview, I wanted to ensure that I worked to minimize any hierarchical perceptions by students as quickly as possible. I brought an awareness of the potential challenges that a hierarchy could create when working with students.

Although I attempted to lessen barriers to building genuine connections with the students, I must acknowledge how my positionality could have also interfered with rapport with the participants. I entered these conversations as an outsider in that I had never stepped foot in LHS. I had preconceived assumptions of LHS given my experiences in urban, public schools however, I had to intentionally silence these to gain an accurate understanding of student's genuine experiences. Also, students were unfamiliar with me as a person and likely my intent despite the coordinator's attempts to explain why I was meeting with them. Therefore, students may not have been as forthcoming about things or were hesitant to share critical information with me. There were also times in the study where I was unaware of things happening in students' lives that affected their ability to fully engage. Thus, I was mindful that these students are human and may or may not feel comfortable or enabled to expressed ideas or experiences that I asked about. I recall being a student in K-12 and feeling as I was being acted upon instead of authentically engaged in my education and wanted to alleviate that feeling for students through their participation in this study.

Although I did not have the words while I was in high school, I knew that parts of my identity and values were being suppressed through 'rules' that controlled how students expressed themselves. Further, policies were in place to detach students from the home and community contexts upon entering the school under the premise of 'prestige'. Even when senior year came, and it was time for prom and graduation the entire graduating class was in an uproar due to rules

of what counted as ‘acceptable’ ways of celebrating the journey we had endured leading up to that monumental moment. This suppression of my authentic expression, values, and other parts of my identity as a Black woman followed me through college and showed in many parts of my life. I went through an ‘unlearning’ process to re-learn who I was and had aspired to be, and to gain the confidence to speak against the many structures that oppress myself and my communities. The centering of students’ identities, values and knowledges is something that should not be robbed from Black youth during their educational journeys but so frequently is. As I arrived at what I wanted the culmination of my doctoral degree to represent, I knew the voices of Black students as a vessel to reshaping urban school spaces needed to be at the forefront.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the purpose and processes of this qualitative, phenomenological study. Research questions were derived out of the study’s purpose, which was to understand how students were perceiving their interactions with CSC’s coordinators, and what meaning their involvement had contributed to students learning experiences at LHS. This was given the context that comprises LHS which influenced students’ perceptions of CSC’s involvement. Students’ voices were most important in dissertation study, and it is my hope that the field of education will see students as a stakeholder group when examining the utility of SCF partnerships in future research. Students were not interviewed to necessarily advocate for partnerships as a reform strategy but to add knowledge, ideas, and critiques regarding their utility. Chapter four and five discusses findings from the analysis of student and adult data respectively.

CHAPTER 4: MAKING MEANING OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCES

Student interviews and group sessions brought forward findings that demonstrates how their involvement with CSC helped them to navigate adverse experiences at LHS. Additionally, students lend knowledge to existing tensions that SCF partnerships may bring to school organizations. As an underrepresented stakeholder group, the experiences that these students described are revealing of critical knowledge to influence how school leaders, and additional stakeholders may reconceptualize the use of partnerships in urban schools and particularly those with predominantly Black student populations. Therefore, this chapter summarizes the experiences of students who were participants in CSC-LHS partnership's case management program, and I bring forth interpretations of how students made meaning of their involvement as it pertains to the quality of their high school experiences. In the following chapter I provide findings from adult interviews that brings forth organizational structures that influenced students' experiences. Overall, the students' made meaning of their experiences as attributed to three major themes: (1) Meaningful Relationships; (2) Home-School Bridge; (3) Compartmentalized Experiences. Meaningful relationships are broken into three sub-themes: (1) Exemplar Moments; (2) Caring Relationships; (3) Accountability.

Meaningful Relationships

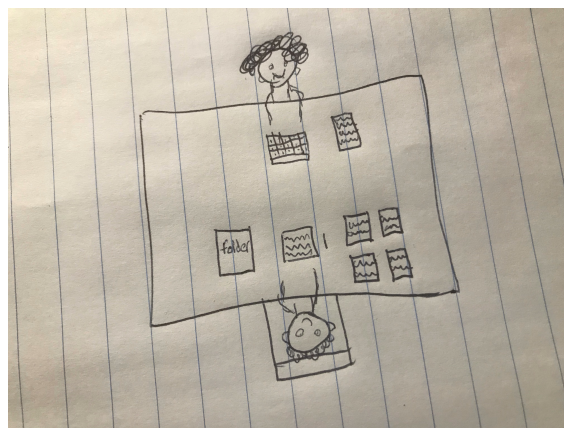
Exemplar Moments

As noted in Chapter 3, developing relationships with students and subsequently their guardians are a central component of CSC's theory of change. Students partaking in the CSC-LHS partnership revealed that the development and sustainment of meaningful relationships with CSC's coordinators were instrumental to their academic success, mental health, and social-emotional development. This section provides stories that exemplifies the ways that Ms. Sadie

has engaged with, and sustained relationships with students to improve their schooling experiences. With the students' permission, I start by introducing drawings that students created in an activity where they were asked to communicate a meaningful experience between them and Ms. Sadie to help me, as an outsider gain a deeper understanding of their relationships. Many students opted to provide 'general' drawings as opposed to one, single experience given the impact that Ms. Sadie had with them across multiple interactions.

For example, James drew a photo (*Figure 4*) of him and Ms. Sadie reflecting about his grades and working through what he needs to do to pass his classes. He says "she is guiding me through the stuff that I need to do and need help with" which is significant for him because in later conversations James explains how he does not ask for help in school due to the stigma of feeling like he does not know things. When asked about the meaningfulness of this interaction with Ms. Sadie he states, "I feel like she supports me." In LHS, the students frequently stated that they felt under supported by teachers, school resource officers and leadership however, the support provided by CSC's coordinator has been instrumental in motivating James to do well academically and to be vocal about the help that he needs.

Figure 2. James, 11th Grade Exemplar

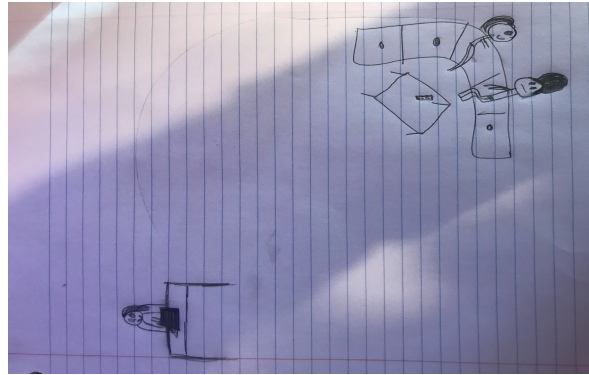


Jac is a student who feels similarly to James. In her drawing (*Figure 5*) she shows Ms. Sadie sitting at her desk working and Jac entering into the room which results in Ms. Sadie stopping what she was working on to help her. She also draws a snack bar because Ms. Sadie often gives Jac and her family food since Jac has communicated that her family struggles with food insecurity. When asked about the meaningfulness of these experiences with Ms. Sadie, Jac stated,

“She drops what she doing to come sit and talk to me. She’ll let me take breaks in her room. It’s not all about food and help, but it’s to make sure that we have stable minds. Like, a lot of teachers don’t really care about that, sometimes we need a break, sometimes we need a snack, sometimes we need somebody to talk to... She listens. When you talk to somebody, they can be like oh, I’m sorry to hear that, but she actually does something about it if she can. It’s like, I don’t know, it’s just somebody that if you need something you can go to, yeah... Like even if it’s not a physical thing, like if you just need somebody to talk to or listen.”

This statement by Jac is demonstrative of the way that Ms. Sadie makes students feel centered in her work with them. Majority of students stated that they do not talk with adults in LHS because they do not feel that they care for students, are judgmental, have too many responsibilities or are unfamiliar with them due to high turnover. Students have expressed that this makes them and their peers reluctant to “open up” about the things affecting them often causing them to be further alienated in school and continue to go without access to fundamental needs.

Figure 3. Jac, 11th Grade Exemplar



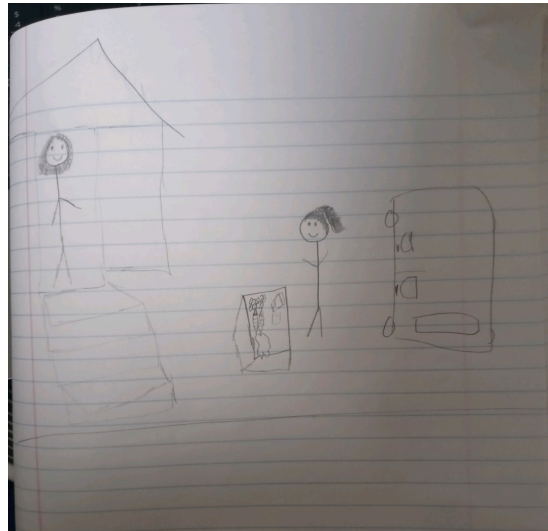
Devin (*Figure 6*) speaks about this as it is related to her drawing and meaningful experiences with Ms. Sadie. She explains that her and her family had been homeless for a prolonged period of time, but she was unwilling to talk with anyone about it until one day Ms. Sunshine, the social worker who works with the CSC-LHS partnership, was able to get her to communicate about these challenges. She was subsequently assigned to the CSC's case management program and attributes a large amount of her success, outlook on life and family's stability to this engagement. She shares,

“In this picture Sadie is bringing food to our house because we didn't have anything. So yeah, there's a lot going on and we didn't have any food. So, she brought food to our house, and stuff, like self-care things. She came to my house every week, and still does, and even helped us get connections for things like beds and stuff. Everything she was doing was so consistent.”

For Devin, Ms. Sadie's engagement with her was consistent and she felt that Ms. Sadie went above and beyond. In later conversations, she talks about the start of their relationship as a pivotal moment to changing her schooling experience. She feels that now she is more confident, successful academically, aware of her mental and emotional health and is willing to make friends. Since she began working with Ms. Sadie, she has been able to work on issues pertaining

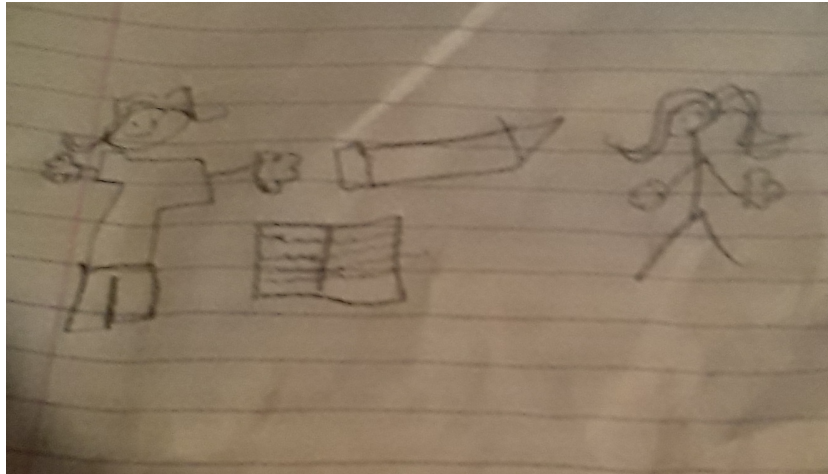
to these challenges. Further, she feels that having such stability both, mentally and physically has profoundly impacted her family and home-life circumstances.

Figure 4. Devin, 12th Grade Exemplar



Thus far, the work that Ms. Sadie does with students have been impactful at multiple, critical levels. However, Savy (*Figure 7*) speaks of an experience in which Ms. Sadie tapped into her interest and helped her to her trust Ms. Sadie, but also provided her with a valuable coping skill. She shares a drawing of a pencil, a book and her and Ms. Sadie in her office. She explains that Ms. Sadie gave her, her first book when she was having a hard time coping with home-related issues and that was one of the most significant moments for her. Savy, in a prior interview, discussed how she loves to read, and it is now her favorite thing to do when she needs to “shut out.” Therefore, according to Savy, Ms. Sadie providing her with her first book was instrumental in helping her to gain an enjoyable, healthy coping strategy.

Figure 5. Savy, 11th Grade Exemplar



In this section, students have indicated various experiences that gave meaning to their relationships with Ms. Sadie and subsequently, their overall experiences at LHS. While different in the nature of help, each student's experience exemplified a level of engagement where they were centered in the adult-student interaction and attention was given to contextual barriers that were inhibiting their academic and developmental growth. Through these exemplary moments, students have begun to communicate the impact of meaningful relationships with adults in the school building. However, Ms. Sadie's presence in LHS has also brought attention to the extent to which students feel like other adults in the building do not care for them. In fact, all four of the students involved stated that without Ms. Sadie working in their school their experiences would be very different, as they feel that there is not another adult in the building who would give them the same level of prioritization, importance, or care. The following sub-section discusses this finding in more detail.

Caring Relationships

This section discusses findings related to students' perceptions of care within the work they did with Ms. Sadie and in LHS's environment more widely, as a way through which they made meaning of their involvement in the CSC-LHS partnership. When asked, students revealed

that aside from Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine they felt that there were no additional adults in the building who cared for them. This prompted me to ask students about their perception of care and what made them feel this way. This section starts with students' perceptions of non-caring interactions, or environmental components, at LHS followed by findings from conversations where they explained the ways that Ms. Sadie made them feel cared for. Note, the word 'care' originated from students when asked about qualities, expressions and actions taken by Ms. Sadie that made them feel centered in their engagement and that improved their schooling experiences.

Students gave a number of reasons that they felt that there were no other adults in LHS that cared for them. Oftentimes, these were related to teacher turnover and increased substitute-teachers however, some were also related to student's perception that adults did not try and maintain a comfortable learning environment for them. For example, when asked about the environment of LHS, Devin shared that,

"It is not good. Like it's... no, no, nope. Like it's just... the teachers there don't like to teach, and we mostly have substitute teachers, and they don't know what they're doing. So, it's like you struggle in class and stuff. And then like this year, when we transitioned from, like, that class to online and stuff like that, it was way different because now we actually have a real teacher that's teaching us, but we never learned the things that she's trying to help us understand."

She continued with,

"...just like people, like, we can at least clean the bathrooms, but we don't have people that like coming to our school to give us like the things we need like computers and the stuff we need for our classes and everything and to improve the environment at the school."

In this conversation Devin continued to communicate to me why she feels that adults in the building do not care about the students, as related to this statement. Devin observes that students do not have an environment that is conducive to learning which interchangeably affects teacher's willingness and ability to teach, and she feels that this impacts students adversely. Most students in the interview felt similarly, however Jac leads our attention to the availability of personnel at LHS. In her interview she states,

“At our school there was really nobody to talk to except for Ms. Sadie and the people at the Teen Health Center are pretty cool to talk to. But Ms. Sadie reached out to the kids more, you don't get to have good relationships with the people at the Teen Health Center, if you're not accident prone or something. I don't really know.”

Where perceptively, Devin feels that a unkept environment and teacher shortages corresponds to an uncaring environment, Jac feels that the lack of people to talk with is most impactful. Here, Jac is explaining how LHS does not have staff who she can build a good relationship with when she just needs to talk. James shares a similar perspective. When asked how he would envision his schooling experience being different without Ms. Sadie he stated,

“The things that would change really if she wasn't at the school is I'd probably be in trouble more than if she was in the school. Most of the time if I get irritated or something, that's somebody I can go to and talk to and get advice and stuff, and I take that and use that in a good way. Without her help I would probably get in trouble like I used to because there is no one else for real.”

James noted in separate conversations that he does not have good relationships with other adults in LHS's building and does not desire too. This is because he states that adults are judgmental or do not prioritize him however, he feels that Ms. Sadie is different. He shares,

“When she helps me, she makes it easy. Whatever it is. With my assignments, she makes the work sound easy and that's how I get my stuff done. She helps me and stuff. When I'm just in class sitting there and my teacher like, ... I be asking her for help sometimes but most of the time I don't bother them 'cause it's like she got, like, 30 other students in class. So sometimes if I don't know how to do stuff, I just sit there and just look dumb because I don't know how to do it but that's why my grades did really, like, most of my grades is bad like that. I only want to talk to Ms. Sadie.”

His reservation to asking for help in class carries back to a particular experience that he states has been difficult for him to overcome,

“It's like some assignments, I just sit there ... like, if I don't know how to do it. Like, sometimes I just be scared to ask the teacher for help. But sometimes I just go to [Sadie] and ask her and stuff to get help. Because I don't really like getting help from other people because something that happened when I had asked a teacher for help and they looked at me like I was stupid, like I ain't know how to do nothing, because it was a simple thing. But ever since then I just stopped asking people for help, and I just, you know ...”

Commonly, students have noted that Ms. Sadie “does not judge” which is a strength of the work that she does and helps students build meaningful relationships with her. James recalled the incident noted above as a basis for why he does not try and build relationships with other teachers in the building. Although it was one teacher who created this barrier, for James it caused lingering effects that affects his academic and social development at LHS. Students, thus far, are communicative of understandings related to how structural inequities in schools (i.e., teacher turnover, limited resources, lack of or limited availability of school personnel) affects their

learning environments and causes lasting effects on students' willingness and ability to adequately engage in their learning. Ms. Sadie's presence at LHS was representative of an alternative adult-student relationship that embodied a level of care that students were not often experiencing thus, this contributes to them navigating towards her as a significant, caring adult in their school environment. However, this also creates tension in the LHS school environment because students are identifying Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine as caring adults who are in opposition to normative student-adult dynamics at LHS. Therefore, students thus far have noted a significant reliance on Ms. Sadie to successfully navigate through LHS. The following quotes are intended to create an understanding of how students have formed this perception.

Below is a quote by Savy when she had been asked to explain to me how Ms. Sadie helps her overcome challenges at LHS. She had been experiencing a lot of bullying in her ninth- and tenth-grade years and recalled an incident where the care given differentiated from that of other adults in similar situations. She shared,

“One day I was crying in the bathroom because I was getting bullied. [Ms. Sadie] came in there and made me feel better. [She told me] just don't let people get to you and they're just jealous of what you have. Mostly people usually say, ‘Suck it up,’ or ‘Grow up. It's okay, dah-dah-dah’ but she didn't. She talked to me and helped me feel better about me. So, yeah, she's helpful in stuff like that.”

When asked about what this experience meant to her and their relationship, she stated “It made me think I could trust her and tell her everything, and it made me feel like she cared, and I was important to her.” Savy have expressed experiences with bullying since entering LHS but shared that Ms. Sadie had been instrumental in helping her to access mental health resources and have acted as a support person, and a liaison with her teachers to help her navigate this

challenge. As noted, LHS lacks adequate access to adults who are mental health professionals so students often times navigate to Ms. Sadie for this service although it is not her primary responsibility. Students are also aware that this is not her primary role in LHS but are appreciative of the time she takes to demonstrate her care for them as ‘people’ as Jac puts it when she explains differing relationships with Ms. Sadie in comparison to her teachers when they, students or staff, have bad days.

“I don't feel like they care for real. I mean, they're probably just trying to do their job and go home. A lot of teachers... they're like ... I don't know. They're rude and when I'm not being mean to somebody, I don't like you being mean to me. I don't know. They would be mad from something with another student and then they'd come over and be mad at you when you're not doing anything. They don't get that we are people too. I get they have bad days but what about how we feel... Like, I'll probably say, there was this one day I was having a really bad day. I don't know what was wrong. I was just really mad and emotional and stuff. When I went to [Ms. Sadie], I didn't show any of that because I don't like showing too many emotions, but I just wanted to talk. So, I went to her, and I just wanted to talk about anything because I didn't feel like going to class and everything. So, we were just sitting in there. I was just talking. I forgot what we were talking about, to be honest, because it wasn't anything about my problem because I didn't even know what my problem was. We were just chilling, and she let me stay in her classroom for a couple minutes because I couldn't miss my whole class. Basically, she just gave me some snacks. We were just sitting on the couch. I can't remember all the details because it was so ... at the beginning of the year. But yeah. She didn't judge anything. She probably saw that I was sad. I don't know. But she didn't say anything. Other students were knocking on the

door, and she sent them back. I felt like she paid attention to me. Yeah. That's what I can remember.”

This story by Jac contributes an understanding of how she perceives the differences in student-adult dynamics with Ms. Sadie and her teachers. She feels that because Ms. Sadie took a short time to be present with her, she has demonstrated a level of care this is not often received from Jac’s teachers. Recall in prior conversations when Jac described that sometimes students just need a “moment” and by Ms. Sadie providing her the space for that moment without taking her away from her responsibilities (attending class) she feels that she cares for her where other adults may not. Jac’s has shared similar statements about school resource officers and administration, whereas she feels that adults in the building seem to be uncaring for the students.

The students reflected on what ‘care’ meant to them and how Ms. Sadie demonstrated a this at a meaningful in their relationships, which they stated was not present in other spaces at LHS. Students are aware, even if unknowingly, of the structural inequities that impacts their school environment and how this might affect their learning experiences. In speaking about school culture, students acknowledged challenges within the physical space of LHS that demonstrated a lack of care for a comfortable and safe learning space. Further, students talked about teacher shortages and turnover, limited availability of mental health personnel and “chaotic” school environments, typically in reference to fights and frequent conflict. However, within this space students also expressed a desire for caring adults to assist them in navigating challenges that affects their learning. Ms. Sadie contributes this to the LHS environment through the theory of change that structures the CSC-LHS partnership. However, while this has proven to be beneficial to students, it has also created tensions around student’s perception of additional

adults in their building thus, contributing to their reliance on Ms. Sadie as the only caring, and preferred student-adult relationship in their school.

In the following section, I share another component of the way that engaging in meaningful relationships with students have affected their schooling experience. In addition to providing a space and dynamic of care for students, Ms. Sadie also holds students accountable to their goals which they state has had surmountable effects on their academic, social and mental/emotional learning.

Mutual Accountability

The engagement in meaningful relationships that require mutual accountability is another way through which students made meaning of their involvement in the CSC-LHS partnership. Ms. Sadie engaged students in meaningful relationships that held them to high expectations, and she demonstrated commitment and allyship in assisting them to meet their goals. For most students, this accountability had vast effects on their growth holistically, especially with regard to overcoming barriers related to their home contexts. For example, Devin shared the following when asked about her goals when working with Ms. Sadie regarding bringing up her grades.

“So, I had gone into her room, and I told her that I was struggling in school and everything and with my grades and all that, because [my teachers] said something about me not going to class. And I was honest like, ‘Oh, yeah I’m not going (laughs)...’ So, I was like, I was telling Ms. Sadie that I was failing that class and she was like, ‘We’re going to start a plan and you going to see what classes you need help with.’ I got to talk to my teachers to ask them like, what can I do to get my grade up, to get it like to at least

like a C or like something, whatever. So that's what I did with my teachers. That was the plan.”

When I asked Devin ‘what about working with Ms. Sadie helped her reach her goal in a way that she could not otherwise’ she shared,

“Well, like I wasn't talkative ... like at all, like I just didn't like people. So, I wasn't around people, like when I was younger because of everything or like my past and everything. We moved a lot and was homeless. So, I didn't like... I wasn't going to school so I couldn't do the things the other kids could do. So, I had to learn at home while I was at school. So, I tried and tried to learn things that I didn't know on my own. So, I didn't talk to people, but she encouraged me to talk to people and I talked to teachers, or she would come to class with me, and she'd go up there, ask the teacher something. Probably asked her like is there anything I can get for that assignment, and then a teacher sent me the work and talked to me about everything. She was really like a supporter on my behalf.

But I had to do the work. She let me know I had to do it, but she helped me.”

Here is an example of Ms. Sadie acting as an ally to Devin but also holding her accountable to her goals. Devin mentions that she had not been open to talking to teachers, friends or anyone to get help due to underlying challenges from her past. Ms. Sadie was aware of those and was able to help Devin achieve her goals and push her to venture out of her comfort zone. Ultimately, it had a substantial impact on Devin, and she eventually ventured out to join two girl’s groups at her school, one centered on advocacy for social causes and the other on young women’s empowerment. She attributes her ability to do this to her work with Ms. Sadie,

“I felt like she was the person that actually helped me to like open up to people 'cause I didn't talk to anybody at first. I didn't really have like friends or anything because she

wasn't there in my ninth-grade year so... but I didn't talk to anybody or whatever. And she had taught me to speak to people even if I don't want to. And like, she showed me that you join groups or whatever, so after, I joined the activities to get me like active and stuff and talking to people... Or with my grades, 'cause I would not, I would not even like be passing... Like, she pushes you to do better with life and everything and grades or like just life in general and how you see yourself, not just grades.”

Devin’s story shows us how accountability within meaningful student-adult relationships can have substantial impacts on student’s development across multiple levels. Jac, shares a similar story but talks more about reliability and consistency within her and Ms. Sadie’s relationship and its impact on her.

“Well, she's reliable. She's always there. Even if I don't speak to her, she comes out to me. She doesn't forget. It's good to just have somebody there even if you don't need them right now, you know that they're there when you do. I don't know. I don't have that many people in my life because most of my family is not here, so I work with what I have.”

When asked how she feels that her and Ms. Sadie’s relationship could be improved she stated, “I feel like she's doing all that she can and I'm doing all that I can. So, it's a good relationship” noting that she has to put work into maintaining the relationship as well. She proceeded to talk about Ms. Sadie helping her and holding her accountable to her goals accordingly,

“If it was not for Ms. Sadie, nobody would be reaching out to me from school to help me. I wouldn't have passed my classes last year if she didn't set up some Zoom calls and help me with my work because I need somebody physically there. So, she was helping me one-on-one with my work and I ended up passing my math class. In school, I would've been starving. Man, I was so hungry. I wouldn't have had somebody pushing me besides,

really, my eligibility card to get my grades up because I would just sit there and probably sleep. But she was always like, "You need to get this done. You need to get this done. I'll help you with this if you need it." If she wasn't there, I probably wouldn't have passed my classes or have had the outlets that I've had or the opportunities that I've had."

Jac is recalling how Ms. Sadie worked with her and held her accountable to her goals. She seemingly felt motivated and through mutual effort was able to achieve the high expectations that Ms. Sadie had set for her within their relationship.

Savy also shared that Ms. Sadie helped her overcome academic challenges because she just did not like math, or sometimes other classes. In her process of goal setting with Ms. Sadie she explained that "...first, [the goal] comes out, like, you're thinking about it, and then you think more about it, and then you say, 'I'm gonna have to do this to get this.' And [Ms. Sadie] pushes you to just do it."

These reflections from students communicates the power of holding them to high expectations and providing support to achieve the goals that they set, or may not have set, for themselves. This aspect of the relationships that exist between Ms. Sadie and these students have been instrumental to their growth academically, socially and emotionally. However, given that they do not receive this type of motivation or support through relationships with additional adults in the building they associate their success solely to the work that they are involved in through the CSC-LHS partnership. This again, lends knowledge to tensions that school-community partnerships may bring into school buildings when students do not feel that they are typically centered in these spaces. However, it has also contributed understandings to *how* the differential approaches taken by community partners might help students to navigate perceptively harmful school spaces. The following section moves forward with findings of how this school-

community partnership impacts students learning experiences in meaningful ways by crossing home-school boundaries.

Home-School Bridge

Another component of the CSC-LHS partnership through which students made meaning of their experiences is the program acting as a 'bridge' between their school and home environments. The families of the students involved in this partnership's program all identified as low SES, and in their interview's, students discussed barriers related to transportation, home and food insecurity and a need for clothing and self-care items. However, students explained how having access to resources to overcome these barriers was influential to their overall learning experiences and were strengths of their work with Ms. Sadie. They also discussed how the partnership potentially providing this type of support to additional students at LHS can contribute to their academic success and mental health, and to improvements within the broader school culture.

When asked, students tended to have a similar explanation of what CSC, or Ms. Sadie, did in their schools.

"Well, Ms. Sadie, she has like a room where she provides the things we need. Like if we need food for our like house or whatever, like she'll bring food to our house. She has clothes like pants, sweaters, coats or anything... socks and everything that you need. Like if you were... if you don't have anything for school, she has like pencils and notebooks and everything. So, you can have all the equipment you need, and she talks to you and everything. Like she's like, a counselor to you, whatever, if you need to talk, that's pretty much what she does."

Or Jac who shared,

“She mostly helped me with food because at the time we were struggling with food. She was just somebody to talk to and she would bring me to the side. We would still have conversations, even if it wasn't an intentional conversation, maybe it was just an interview or something that she had planned for me or something. She was somebody really reliable talk to any anything. Like home, school, how's everything going and stuff. I don't like to talk to people. I have very small circle of people I can talk to. But this is nice. Even the simplest things, you just talk to her about. She knows about my school stuff and home life.”

Students understand Ms. Sadie as a person who assists students and their families with everything they need regardless to if it is related to in-school or out-of-school resources. Also, they see her as someone to talk with about school or home related issues, or as someone who connects them with things to do in the community. For instance, Jac mentioned in her interview that Ms. Sadie took them to yoga, and it was a new thing for her that she did not even realize existed in her community.

“When I went to her, she would offer food and snacks because I was always hungry. She offered clothes, and backpacks and school supplies, and cooked food and toiletries. We even went on a yoga trip one time. She took me and some other kids to do yoga. That really ... I've never done yoga before so that was a new but interesting experience. I did not even know a yoga place was in [city]. Yeah, she does a lot for our school.”

From here, students explained to me that CSC, or Ms. Sadie, knew much about multiple facets of their lives as it was relevant to their learning experiences. She was able to act as a bridge between them and their teachers, families or additional adults. She was also knowledgeable about things going on in the community like job fairs and various events that

could be of benefit to the students and their families. Most impactful to students however, seemed to be her ability to utilize the contextual understandings that she had of students' lives to personalize their relationships as opposed to treating students' needs as homogenous.

According to students, this individualized engagement also has implications for improving the broader school culture of LHS. When I asked about how this support could potentially help other students, given all that they had communicated about adverse school environments and students needs they shared the perspective that LHS's entire culture would be positively changed. Based on her own experiences Devin shared,

"I don't think I would have anything that I have right now if [Ms. Sadie] wasn't there.

Because we don't have many people at the school who cares that much. And she was the only person that give people clothes and everything. If a student didn't have a coat, she'd have a coat in the room. She had a whole bunch of clothes for us to choose from and school supplies that we needed. So, she'd just give us everything we need. It's a lot of kids at our school that don't have anything. They don't have things and stuff like that, so people talk about them. They don't have clothes and stuff like that. She had stuff that they could use, and they could have so they can stay healthy and everything."

Devin also speaks about students potentially being *happier* if they received this type of support which could in turn reduce the amount of conflict and bullying happening at LHS. In agreeance, James shared that "maybe a lot of people wouldn't be struggling with stuff they're scared to say they are struggling with" if they were receiving the same sort of support. Jac added that when people struggle with these things, they 'act out',

"It would definitely make [LHS] better because a lot of the kids in my school ... I don't know exactly if it's just they need someone to talk to or if their struggling at home, but a

lot of them tend to act out or, on the other hand, they seem really closed off. It's just a lot of ... I don't know. I just feel like everybody needs somebody to talk to, or, at least, help them out with something. But a lot of them are scared to go to ask for help.”

Students are able to identify how issues at home are spilling over into student’s school environments and are thus adversely affecting the culture of LHS as a whole. Students are also acknowledging how having access to needed resources puts them in a better space physically and mentally which in turn positively impacts their learning. Further, because students so intricately navigate LHS’s environment they are aware of issues that are affecting students more largely and are therefore can play a critical role in the contribution of the shape of school-community partnerships to attend to the needs of them and their peers. Because students are not often consulted however, the findings in this chapter have also shed light to the compartmentalization of student’s experiences when engaging in the partnership’s program. Thus far, this chapter has presented a number of findings in which students talk about the engagement that Ms. Sadie does with them in opposition to the normative culture at LHS. This, the compartmentalization of student’s experiences, is the final finding that I will discuss.

Compartmentalized Experiences

The experiences of students who are involved in the CSC-LHS partnership communicates the impact that school-community partnerships can have on assisting students to navigate difficult learning environments. Further, their experiences contribute understandings of *how* partnerships act as a bridge between students’ home and school spaces and build meaningful relationships as a mechanism for improving students’ academic, social, and emotional development. However, the findings in this chapter also communicates existing tensions that external partners can bring forth within urban school environments. In each of the students’

findings they speak of their experiences with the partnership team in stark contrast to their engagement with teachers, behavioral interventionists, school resource officers and additional adults at LHS. Thus, their experiences as it relates to support, engagement and centeredness is expressed as being compartmentalized whereas additional adults within LHS engage students in a way that embodies competing student-adult dynamics. For example, within the realm of meaningful relationships students commonly stated that ‘Ms. Sadie is the only one who cares...’ or ‘without Ms. Sadie nobody would do these things for me or try to help me.’ Or recall this statement from Jac about her experiences with her teachers,

“I don't feel like they care for real. I mean, they're probably just trying to do their job and go home. A lot of teachers... they're like ... I don't know.”

Students also have commonly stated that they would only prefer to work with Ms. Sadie or Ms. Sunshine because of their ability to make students feel important or prioritized in their engagement with them. Hearing students discuss the differences in student-adult relationships amongst the partnership team and additional staff at LHS led to my desire to gain a deeper understanding of *how* LHS structurally contributes to this sense of compartmentalized engagement. Specifically, regarding how it plays a role in students’ development and what mechanisms are creating this tension. These findings are presented in the following chapter through the lenses of adults who possess technical knowledge of LHS’s organizational structures and of the CSC-LHS partnership’s implementation.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, students communicated how their relationship with Ms. Sadie, the CSC coordinator at LHS, embodies characteristics of care, accountability and contextually relevant support which helped them to be successful in LHS’s school environment. However, this chapter

also conveys student's significant reliance on Ms. Sadie for their academic, social, and emotional development. Students' experiences were interpreted as compartmentalized given their reliance on CSC to enable their success and their positioning of the facilitators in opposition to the normative environment at LHS. These findings made me question the extent to which CSC was fitting within the broader LHS organization, and what structural factors influenced students' perceptions of the partnership's services. Further, I wondered what distinctions existed in the pedagogies utilized by CSC's team and LHS's staff regarding student engagement. This is given the starkly different interactions that students described with these adults.

Thus far, students present the partnership as a mechanism used to mitigate perceptively harmful school environments. However, they have not conveyed findings that illustrates CSC's success in restructuring LHS's organization to be more responsive to student's needs. I interviewed the adult actors, Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine who were at the forefront of the implementation of the CSC-LHS partnership to gain an understanding of LHS's organization and CSC's place within it. Further, to gather a sense of how organizational change occurs at LHS. Their interview findings are presented according to the same themes through which students made meaning of their experiences in this chapter. These findings are discussed in chapter five.

CHAPTER 5: CSC-LHS PARTNERSHIP'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

In the previous chapter, I discussed findings from students about their experiences within the CSC-LHS partnership and the ways that they made meaning of their involvement in relation to their high school experiences. A second area of inquiry in this study was to understand the actions of adult actors, and of existing organizational structures within LHS that influenced students' experiences. This chapter, therefore, brings forth the perspectives of adults who were facilitators of the partnership's case management program as it relates to this inquiry. While the knowledges and perspectives of students are valid in themselves, I only add adult perspectives to lend contextual knowledge of the organizational structures that exists at LHS which students would have no technical knowledge of. I therefore frame the findings according to the themes that were discussed in chapter four which were: (1) Meaningful Relationships; (2) Home-School Bridge; (3) Compartmentalized Experiences. Following this chapter is a discussion of the research implications and conclusions as it relates to implementing school-community partnerships within urban, predominantly Black schools.

Meaningful Relationships

The power of meaningful relationships was significant to students' experiences with the CSC-LHS partnership. Students spoke of their relationship with Ms. Sadie in opposition to the normative culture at LHS which prompted me to ask Ms. Sunshine, a permanent member of LHS's school organization, about normative student-adult dynamics in LHS. Further, I asked Ms. Sadie, CSC's site coordinator, about her observations regarding the difference in relationships amongst herself and additional adults in the building. Differences seem to be rooted in multiple components. First, Ms. Sadie has a philosophy of student voice and leadership that

differs from the normal functioning at LHS. For example, when I asked Ms. Sadie about how she weighted students' voices as instrumental to her work with them she shared,

“I feel like the students' voice is what gave me a glimpse into the real Pontiac high school, like the reality of what's needed from their perception, which is the most important viewpoint. If you're serving kids, it should be their perspective that matters the most. Also, they just gave me a lot of good ideas. Like kids will tell you what they want and what they need. Talking to the kids is what gave me ideas for like, supports that I could bring in for my case managed kids, but also for like the whole school.”

She continued to tell me about issues that students had identified in particular which overlapped with what the students had explained to me in chapter four about LHS's environment. Also, she mentioned that these perspectives were different than she could get from adults regarding the intricate environment of LHS.

“So, I think that, um, the students, what they contributed was like some real, like real legit knowledge of the school that you can't get from adults. Like sometimes I feel like when you're talking to adults that work at and are going to schools like they don't know all the like social dynamics necessarily. Some adults are really in tune with that with kids, but others are just kind of like there for their job. And like, they don't understand like the cliques at the school or the real, like dramas that are happening for kids or the like overall bullying situation.”

Ms. Sadie's mention of adults 'just doing their jobs' sometimes is similar to what students explained about student-adult relationships at LHS. She added that students will be more knowledgeable about issues that need attention based on their experiences.

“...Like the kids will be able to tell you, we have a bullying problem at the school. Or like the kids will be able to tell you, kids are very like segregated at this school and they don't talk across groups like, you know, or they'll be able to tell you like the real down and dirty stuff about like, what's going on socially. And like for the, for the kids, like from a socio-emotional like standpoint, if I'm going to be doing work on that as an adult in the school, I want to know like the realities.”

Ms. Sadie seems to weigh heavily on student voice to build out the support that she provides to school organizations. This means that she is also building substantial relationships with them to make them comfortable to confide in her about present issues. Ms. Sunshine shares a value for centering students voices as Ms. Sadie describes here but notes that LHS as an entire organization does not. I asked her about the prioritization of student voice within LHS to gather an understanding of how these philosophies are similar or differ. She shared that student voice is not has highly prioritized as opportunities for student's involvement is seldom active or communicated. Ms. Sunshine explained that LHS as a school organization struggles with communication, and she believes this affects students' opportunities for voice and leadership. She stated,

“I do know we have student council. I do know we have yearbook. I do know we have, you know, the vice president's initiative and all that stuff. I do know they are more than welcome to speak at board meetings. I also know that I don't know how well it's being disseminated to students.”

Given that Black students are traditionally uninvited to into spaces of agency within their school's I wonder to what extent the difference in value of their knowledges shaped their perceptions of CSC and of LHS. Ms. Sadie engaged students in their work with her where in

other instances students recalled feeling as if they were more so acted upon. Recall Jac stating that oftentimes teachers do not see students as human. In their interviews, students expressed a lot of ideas to reshape LHS to be more responsive to their needs, however, aside from Ms. Sadie no one consults with them to identify students' needs or wants. Here, Ms. Sadie expands on her philosophy around centering students input to shape her practice of providing appropriate supports.

“When I talked to the kids is when I felt like I really could understand what things truly accessible, what things were truly being utilized and what gaps really existed at the school in the kids' minds. Because ultimately if you offer something in a school, but it's not being used, or it's not something that kids care about or feel comfortable with or whatever the case, then it's not really a support. So, I use that information then to try to think about like, okay, well the kids have access to this thing, but they don't know what exists. Like maybe one of the things that I can do as CSC is to work with the teen health center on like publicizing themselves and making themselves known. So that the kids feel comfortable using that service. So, stuff like that, I guess that's just one example.”

Ms. Sadie places high importance on utilizing student voice as a mechanism for engaging in student-centered support. Here, she is situating students as valuable stakeholders and knowledge producers regarding the needs of them and their peers in LHS. Recall from student interviews that they often mentioned that their peers were struggling with various issues that were shaping their attitudes and behavior in school, and thus, school culture. In centering students in the way described above Ms. Sadie is best positioned to receive this knowledge and therefore ensure that her practice with students is reflective. Potentially, this philosophy of the

importance of listening to students is what communicates the level of care and support that students described in opposition to their perceptions of other adults in the building.

Another component that potentially influenced student's perspectives were the extent to which students were being held to high expectations. Accountability and high expectations of students was frequently demonstrated across students' interviews about their work with Ms. Sadie. Recall Savy discussing how when working with Ms. Sadie she has an expectation of accomplishing whatever goals her and Ms. Sadie decide upon. Jac and Devin alike shared that they created plans with Ms. Sadie where she held them accountable to achieving their goals. These were salient parts of student's relationship and engagement with the CSC program and research demonstrates that in holding Black students to high expectations deficit-oriented practices are mitigated. In turn, students experience more positive learning environments. However, Ms. Sunshine stated that students are not held to high expectations by teachers and additional staff at LHS where they would be enabled to succeed. She shares that,

“We [teachers, resource offers, support staff] care for these students so much that sometimes we are not good for them. Sometimes we are enabling them because of us, our hearts, and our untrained professionalism as far as that social-emotional piece and the mental health piece. So, whereas a lot of our adults embrace that the students are struggling, they don't increase their expectation. They lower it thinking it's helpful. And so, when your attempts to embrace somebody, showing them how special they are, because they have some sort of deficit, whether it's environment or whatever then the expectations are so lowered. Yeah. From academics to behavior, it is not okay.”

In this quote, Ms. Sunshine is speaking to differences in the level of expectation that students were held to and also pedagogical foundations to working with students between CSC's

team and additional LHS staff. Here Ms. Sunshine mentioned social-emotional learning as a mechanism through which building relationships with students can be improved. This is another component that I believe shapes the differences in students' relationships with CSC and other adults. CSC practice is grounded in a theory of change that emphasizes relationship building, but also social-emotional learning. Because of this, I wondered the extent to which LHS as an organization were emphasizing social-emotional learning in their engagement with students. Ms. Sunshine shared some important contextual information.

“That's something I believe government or a higher up in the district think they're doing by now reinstating SEL [social-emotional learning]. The school support network team, the building turnaround network team and the district turnaround network team is emphasizing SEL. We also have a climate and culture team. So, we [LHS staff] feel like that's what we're doing is that collaboration but it's still in silos because our communication... it's a breakdown somewhere with communication. And I will not say it's on the behalf of the district, I think it's on the receiving end because I can honestly, and truthfully to my heart say we do a lot with communication. So, it's a matter of whether or not staff are being receptive.”

This difference in approaches that grounds engagement with students at LHS and within CSC's theory of change also may influence the difference in student-adult relationships. Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine utilizes this foundation for their work with students and according to Ms. Sunshine, as an organization LHS's staff are not receptive to the implementation of SEL currently.

These findings provide some important context to why students perceive differences in meaningful relationships with CSC and LHS's staff. In sum, I interpreted three organizational

components that influence differences in student-adult relationships with CSC's team and LHS's staff. These have contributed to the meaning that students make of their involvement with the CSC-LHS partnership. First, Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine places a different value on student voice and leadership than LHS's staff more broadly. Because of this, they were able to shape the support they provided to students according to their needs, strengths, and goals. Research that discusses Black students' voices asserts that students can speak against oppressive school conditions, take agency in shaping more responsive environments for them and their peers, and collaborate to create sustainable solutions (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017). In collaborating with adults to do so, students form more meaningful student-adult relationships (Mitra D. , 2018).

The second component that shaped students' perceptions was the difference in expectations that Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine held students too higher expectations than other staff. In holding students to high expectations, students are able gain a sense of belonging in their school spaces and commit to educationally focused goals. Lastly, CSC and LHS engages students according to different foundational pedagogies. CSC utilizes a theory of change that emphasizes social-emotional learning and LHS, while seemingly headed in the direction of SEL, has not fully adapted to district assertions that teachers begin to incorporate SEL in classrooms. In chapter four, students discussed emotional, mental, and social improvements as a strength of working with Ms. Sadie that can be attributed to CSC's emphasis on social-emotional learning for improvement in all aspects of student's education.

While these experiences are significant, one tension raised here is that student's involvement with the CSC program has caused them to further alienate from their teachers. For example, James states that he would only work with Ms. Sadie even if it meant not completing

his work during class out of fear of asking for help from his teachers. He identified her as the one, sole person who would not judge him and therefore, without her presence I wonder how his academics might suffer. While this is not true for all students, it is a finding that requires attention. As partners are coming into schools and to help students navigate adverse school organizations students are positioning them as significant beings. However, if these partners were to exit school spaces, we must acknowledge how then students' educational experiences will revert. Further, students' experiences in building relationships with these adults' sheds light about the experiences of other students who did not partake in the case management program. The implications of these findings are discussed further in chapter six however, the next section expands on students' experiences that helped to shape the meaning of their involvement with CSC and thus, their perceptions of LHS.

Home-School Bridge

CSC's case management program also played a role in bridging students' home and school environments which students felt was significant to their schooling experiences. Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine built substantial relationships with students, their families and introduced them to additional community resources through their engagement. Some students discussed how without this intricate involvement they felt that they would not be where they are academically, emotionally, or socially. For example, Devin shared that because Ms. Sadie was present at LHS her and her family were able to connect with resources to get the things they needed. Further, she felt that without Ms. Sadie she would not have gotten the support she needed because "no one cares that much." Students associated Ms. Sadie acting as a bridge between their home and school spaces as her care for them. However, it is important to acknowledge that her role in LHS was to connect students with resources address home related

challenges that were presenting as barriers to their academic success. Take Ms. Sunshine's description of the role of CSC in LHS,

“So, CSC, the site coordinator has their own office here and they come in every day, and they are essentially so a part of our family now that I don't think people understand that it's a whole different organization. But for me, CSC act as a very strong referral source and resource. Our CSC person, and I am referring to Sadie at this point because we just got the new one, is very essential and anything we've asked her for we've gotten. She's big on making that connection. So, CSC here for LHS is essential as far as our resources and referrals for wraparound services. Not the wraparound services from Lack City schools, but she wraps around our students for us and that case management piece she has is big. That connection piece she has with that parent and community engagement is big and CSC goes above, I know, that caseload piece and just serves as an overall resource for the building.”

From an organizational standpoint, Ms. Sunshine describes CSC as embedded within the school's structure, and as a bridge that increases their access to external resources and referrals to organizations who might be able to help their students and families. Notably, she discussed the wraparound component of CSC as being very essential and acting as an added layer of support to the district's established wraparound services. With this sort of support occurring within the school with someone students have frequent, personable access to, students can receive more appropriate services. Additionally, Ms. Sunshine notes that there is an instant gratification of when students are identified to be in need, or their families are experiencing significant barriers. CSC is immediately there to provide the help that is required.

Her thoughts were in alignment with what students communicated when I asked of the significance of Ms. Sadie helping with navigate adverse experiences and barriers that spanned across their home and school environments. In my conversations to students what was most salient about these experiences was Ms. Sadie being able to address issues that they saw as their most immediate needs, as opposed to “passing classes” as stated by Jac. A distinguishing component through which students made meaning of their work with CSC in relation to LHS was that they felt as if Ms. Sadie cared about their well-being as ‘people’ and teachers were more focused on them getting in their assignments and having appropriate behavior in classes. For reference, recall Jac saying “I don't feel like they care for real. I mean, they're probably just trying to do their job and go home” whereas Ms. Sadie made sure students were well holistically.

In addition to providing resources for students, their perception of Ms. Sadie’s care for their home environments also stems from her relationships with their families. CSC views families as instrumental to student success and therefore their services extend to assist them as well. However, LHS has a more deficit-based view of families in which they do not believe families care about their children’s education according to the documents that were analyzed. CSC played a role in aiming to improve this relationship which students may not have technical knowledge of. For example, in a need’s assessment LHS staff indicated that they feel as if parents do not engage in their children’s education however, students and parents indicated that they do try to engage and care about their student’s success. However, parents indicate barriers to involvement to the extent that they are expected by LHS. Parents reported barriers to transportation, childcare, and job insecurity amongst other challenges. However, CSC has committed to engage in activities that mitigates these barriers and the distrust for LHS staff that parents have reported. Ms. Sadie therefore reached out to build relationships with parents of the

students on the case management program which enabled her to foster more well-rounded support. Additionally, the CSC team aimed to incorporate more on-line parent engagement activities for parents who were experiencing barriers to coming into the school building.

This approach to connecting with students' families demonstrated asset-based perspectives taken by CSC of the LHS's students. Although students did not have the technical knowledge, in chapter four they also discussed Ms. Sadie taking an asset-based perspective to bridging their school and community spaces. Take for example when Jac stated that Ms. Sadie had taken them to a yoga studio which she had no idea even existed in her community. CSC bridges relationships with local community assets which makes it easier to connect their families with appropriate resources. When asked about partners Ms. Sadie shared,

“So, community partners can be anything from like a church group or a coalition of lots of churches that have come to make a group. We have one of those like, like, uh, an electronics corporation. We also have a homeless shelter as a partner. Like, it ranges from like, not nonprofits, churches, other social groups. There are a lot of like really small places like a local grocery store that's run by someone in the community. We also have volunteers who can be like individuals or groups of people from a church or something. So yeah, partners are really like all over the place. We also have some like, national partners, so like for example, um, BP, say for students, we don't know a single individual at their huge operation, but they are like, they've partnered with us at a national level, so we can apply to them for free vouchers for eye exams.”

So, from an organizational level, CSC has access to multiple partners and bring those relationships into LHS. LHS struggles with family and community engagement which is why CSC has become a partner. However, from students' perspectives they do not see CSC as a

separate partner who's tasked with doing this work, but as a person who supports them and their families in opposition to what is normative amongst other adults. It is meaningful for students to have someone who they feel that they can speak with about home and school related challenges because in their minds they do not exist separately. Devin, for example, discussed how she was not doing well in school because of her family's history of homelessness and her attending multiple schools which made it hard to understand where she should be academically. This made her hesitant to ask teachers for help and build relationships with adults. Ms. Sadie became aware of her home challenges and assisted her to mitigate these by building a network of support, which eventually allowed Devin to work alongside Ms. Sadie to subsequently improve her schooling.

Thus far, this section has discussed Ms. Sadie's role in LHS to help students mitigate home and school related challenges. However, in addition to organizational components we must also shed light onto systemic inequities that makes Ms. Sadie's work necessary at LHS. As noted, students and their families experience a myriad of social challenges including food and housing insecurity, inequitable healthcare, transportation, and limited resources for clothe and school supplies. Students may not have the technical knowledge of these inequities according to racial and social lines, but they are aware that they and their families had unmet needs, and these overflowed into how their school spaces. Further, they are aware that until working with Ms. Sadie no adult at LHS assisted them to overcome these barriers. These are characteristics of inequitable urban schools that Black students navigate. While these issues are not created by the hand of LHS's educators, the harm is perpetuated when schools act as if they do not exist and continue to hold students to unrealistic standards without first ensuring that their wellbeing is intact. From my interpretation, this is the issue that students were pointing out. Students can

identify the difference in roles of teachers, CSC, social workers, health workers and resource officers in their schools. However, what CSC contributed to their experiences was a person who students felt cared enough to make sure they were fine as human beings before they could be students. This is an example of students perceiving their work with Ms. Sadie as compartmentalized as I discussed in chapter four. In the following section I will present more findings from Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine that sheds light on CSC's siloed operationalization.

Compartmentalized Experiences

Students oftentimes discussed their experiences with CSC's team as in opposition to the normative culture at LHS. Although Ms. Sadie had a purpose that was distinct from teachers and additional adults at LHS, her difference in emphasizing student-centeredness was seemingly most salient. She engaged students from an asset-based perspective and worked from a theory of change that was different than LHS staff. First, was her prioritization of relationships with students as a mechanism of increasing their academic, social, and emotional success. In LHS students or staff did not describe a student-centered approach in which student-adult relationships were a priority. Secondly, given that students at LHS have a high need for resources and basic needs, Ms. Sadie's ability to provide this support is very important for students. Students do not feel that their home and school environments exist separately so therefore, the challenges they experience at home carry over into their school spaces. Ms. Sadie's presence across both environments and her ability to immediately address their needs has helped to build substantial relationships with students.

I asked Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine how they perceive this divide and their both were aware that students situate them as separate from LHS's remaining staff. Ms. Sadie talked about the CSC room in LHS and shared,

“Kids love the CSC room because there's this fun adult in there that doesn't teach during class time. So, sometimes it becomes this room of like ‘I'm going to go there and escape’ and so it's like important to be careful to like, make sure that it's only open on a stop by basis.”

Ms. Sadie is aware that students are drawn to her room but to keep this space from causing conflict amongst other staff she shared that she tries to keep it controlled where students cannot just hang around because they want to escape class. She used the language “fun adult” to describe how students perceive her. However, students have described her office as a space where they like to escape the business of their classrooms, lunch periods and hallways. Ms. Sunshine explains that teachers oftentimes do not agree with the ways Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine interacts with students from a more personable level, however. Or they feel as if that type of relationship building is not their jobs.

“...so, this is going back to our social, emotional learning...I don't know at what point education got away from social-emotional learning being a natural part of teaching. But the fact I can get referrals saying, ‘my student had their head down’ or ‘my student wrote in their assignment that they're sad’ and you never said, ‘can we talk about this?’ Or ‘I read this; I'm concerned’... and then the question is ‘have you talked with the student? And they're like, no, I don't deal with that.’ So, that's what happens, and you know, students are very keen. So, they read that, and they look at that as they don't care. And then when we can give them that one-on-one then they love it because that's what they want... They can be real with us truthfully because they're not in front of an audience. The difference is when they're with us they don't have to put on any mask or costume to

keep other students from judging them in the classroom and teachers for thinking whatever they're going to think of them.”

This quote goes a bit deeper than referring to CSC’s team as ‘fun’ however, it does communicate more information regarding why students feel that they have compartmentalized experiences.

Ms. Sunshine refers to the power of social-emotional learning because that is the foundation of her and Ms. Sadie’s work with students. She explains how some teachers feel that this is not a part of their roles in LHS, but instead the work of CSC. This creates a fragmented culture across LHS where students are not receiving the same level of engagement with various adults. It creates a preference for whom they would want to work with above others. However, this is also an implication of larger structural fragmentation that may place too many demands on teachers and additional staff to feel that adopting this seemingly new philosophy is too much. Relatedly, Ms. Sunshine shared how decision-making occurs at LHS when I asked how organizational change might occur.

“Top down. So, the top will have, however, they get this light bulb idea and then it's implemented and then it's told to, um, administration and then it's disseminated to us. So, I honestly don't think it's a fair system where our voices are heard, even though we have all these systems to allow it. But I think it's tough now, so. Okay. It's um, it's, I wouldn't say it's a dictatorship, but it could definitely fit.”

When I asked if this contributes to staff not being receptive to adopting similar philosophies as the CSC partners, as discussed in the context of social-emotional learning, in LHS she continued,

“I think, I must be fair, I think it's because way at the top you got different concerns, you got different priorities. And from down here, we look up and think you forgot what it's like to be here, but me who's been up, middle, and down... I know how to look up. I know

that it does look different from a different seat. And so, whereas we who are on the frontline—and I still stand firm that we should have our voices heard more—I do understand those at the top have to answer to much more than we have to. We might not know it, but those at the top is answering to the money.”

She continued to talk about how this decision-making system causes frustration for staff and how different groups of staff see different priorities in relation to LHS’s environment. Therefore, it contributes to the reluctance of reconstructing students’ engagement at LHS to create more universal, and less harmful school experiences. This organizational fragmentation at the top of the district carries into LHS and creates siloed experiences for students. Ms. Sunshine agreed that students perceive CSC’s engagement to occur in silos and thus comparatively assess their relationships with different adults.

“It’s such a divide. [The students] do know how to compartmentalize because they love Ms. Sadie. They love Ms. Sunshine. And they are always like ‘why don’t you be a teacher?’ And I say, ‘because then you will not like me. I’m not going to be the best teacher. Cause I don’t have that kind of patience for a group of students, upwards of 10.’ And so, that is the culture around here.”

She adds,

“We have a multilevel culture because then you also have the administrators and we have police authority officers and those relationships, the boundaries get crossed. So, there’s also that confusion, sort of speak, or conflict. And [students] do like their support staff, but that’s, I think that’s key in any environment to be able to get that one-on-one when you need it.”

Ms. Sunshine is explaining in this quote that regardless of adult's roles students will always preference relationship with adults who can provide them with individual attention when they need it. Findings in this chapter demonstrate this to be true. Students felt that CSC's team prioritized their wellbeing, centered their needs, and allowed them to "take a moment" when they needed to just be. Their work is grounded in social-emotional foundations where students are not only educated towards academic standards. Instead, they are humanized in that the development of their social, emotional, and mental capacities are nourished. This has occurred through conversations and through helping students acquire basic needs so that they can succeed.

Chapter Summary

These findings presented in this chapter, lends awareness to not only students' compartmentalization of their experiences but also to fragmented structural components of LHS that contributes to this. The presence of the CSC-LHS partnership within LHS's school organization has raised awareness of tensions related to student-adult relationships, in which these relationships are the result of competing approaches to student-centeredness. Further, the relevance of contextual knowledge in supporting students through their learning is seemingly inconsistent across the adults that students are interacting with at LHS. The findings within this chapter, in conversation with students' perceptions, leads me to question the utility of school, community and family partnerships in urban schools.

Students made meaning of their involvement with the partnership mainly through their perceptions of care and access to needed resources. While CSC's main role is to provide access to resources for students and their families, it is through their ability to build meaningful, student-centered relationships that they are positively influencing students learning experiences at LHS. Given what is discussed here, they rely on competing approaches to additional staff at

LHS. While it is important to note that the underlying knowledges and intentions that drives the work of various adults (i.e., teachers, administrators, social workers, CSC coordinator) may differ, I bring forth the question of how school-community partnerships might assist whole school organizations to reshape their culture to be more student-centered and responsive to their needs and identities. The following chapter provides a reiteration of this study's purpose, a summary of findings, and discussions of research implications and conclusions.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

School-community partnerships are commonly discussed as a strategy of urban school reform however, research typically discusses them from the lenses of adult stakeholders and often around specific outcomes. This study was intended to contribute to the exiting research by bringing forth Black students' perspectives of school-community partnerships, particularly with an understanding of *how* they inform student's learning experiences. Therefore, students' voices are centered in this study as they are positioned as a stakeholder group who possess knowledge to help shape the utility of school-community partnerships in urban schools. In this concluding chapter, I re-introduce the purpose of this study, the research questions and the conceptual framework that guided this inquiry. Finally, I present a summary of my findings with respect to existing literature, and an interpretation of findings utilizing a Black Critical Epistemology before bringing forth implications for policy, practice, and research. These implications attend to the significance of centering Black students voices in practice, policy, and research regarding the implementation of partnerships and broader reforms in urban education.

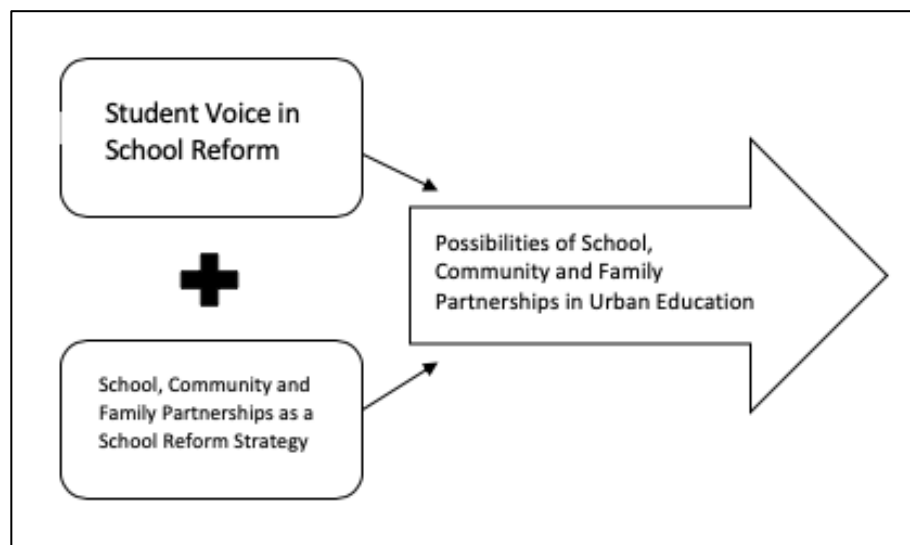
Purpose of the Study, Research Questions and Conceptual Framework

In this dissertation study I intended to bring forth students' voices regarding school-community partnerships to gain an understanding of their experiences and to inform the conceptualization and utility of partnerships in urban schools. To add relevant contextual knowledge, I also sought to learn of their school's organizational structures that influenced students' experiences with, and meaning-making of, the CSC-LHS partnership. CSC is a community-based organization who distributed services to supplement students' academic, social, and emotional needs within Lake HS. Students who were recipients of CSC's services

were interviewed about their experiences, and about how this type of school-community partnership could improve the broader culture of Lake HS. Adult facilitators of the partnership were also interviewed to gain an understanding of existing organizational structures that influenced students' experiences. These were school structures that students would have limited technical knowledge of. This inquiry was guided by the following research questions and conceptual framework (from Chapter 2):

1. How do Black students' interactions with an urban, school-community partnership impact their high school experiences?
2. What organizational structures contributes to students' perceptions of their experiences with the urban, school-community partnership?

Refer to Figure 1. Conceptual Framework, Page 36.



Summary of Findings

Overview

School-community partnerships are a highly advocated for school reform strategy across practice, research, and policy to increase students' access to needed resources, and in turn student's academic achievement in urban schools. Partnerships are also increasingly sought due

to policy mandates, particularly in predominantly Black school districts which was the case at LHS (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). In predominantly Black schools, these partnerships are frequently utilized to improve environments like LHS's which are resource scarce, experience teacher shortages, lack equitable access to mental and physical health professionals, and are plagued with policies and practices that are unresponsive to students' identities, lived experiences, cultures or ways of knowing (Green T. L., 2018). These ultimately contribute to uncondusive learning environments which students discussed in our conversations about LHS's culture. Additionally, LHS's environment was exclusionary to students' families given their Eurocentric standards of engagement, and neglect to accommodate parents and guardians who experienced challenges related to housing, transportation, childcare, health care, and job-related inequities. Through my conversations with students, adults, and through document analysis, I became aware of the existence of these issues in LHS's school culture and the role of CSC to mitigate them. While some partnership literature attributes these issues to economic inequities, I attest that these were also a result of racial injustices. Students and staff's descriptions of LHS's environment were consistent with literature that explicates the conditions of predominantly Black schools (Sugrue, 2014).

Consistent with existing literature, I found that Black students were aware of the inequities that exists in their schools and the adverse effects that they had on their learning (Lee, 1999). Students were also aware of how challenges pertaining to their home environments spilled into their school's spaces and resulted in educators' deficit perceptions and treatment of them. For example, when asked about desired changes James discussed how student's freedom of expression through dress is controlled because adults assume students are gang affiliated. Also, Devin who shared that her home experiences had been infringing on her ability to complete her

assignments but instead of inquiring, teachers assumed that she was disinterested in her education. Ms. Sadie acted as an ally to these students in helping them to overcome these barriers that were inhibiting their ability and desire to take agency in their learning. Their assertion of these challenges is consistent with literature that argues for Black students' voices in leadership and centrality in urban reform initiatives (Howard, 2001). By centering Black students in this study, I became aware of how LHS's environment was affecting students and what CSC was doing to improve students' experiences. Through their voices we can acknowledge the adversity they experienced at LHS and utilize their contributions to assess partnerships, but also to reshape them to help to create more liberatory school environments (Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017; Mitra, 2009).

Regarding CSC, their role at LHS was to help students navigate barriers to needed resources to improve students' academic, social, and emotional learning. This included building relationships with student, their families, communities, and additional allied stakeholders. However, students' involvement in the CSC-LHS partnership ultimately played a critical role in navigating LHS's cultural barriers. Given CSC's intricate involvement with students, students subsequently began to name teachers, additional adults, and organizational components as problems and as perpetually causing academic, social, and emotional harm. Students' perspectives of CSC's presence in LHS's environment lends knowledge to how community partners can create fragmented, or compartmentalized experiences for students. This is given the connections students developed with CSC's team because of the support they provided. In the following sub-sections I summarize the ways through which students made meaning of their experiences in relation to existing literature.

Meaningful Relationships

Ultimately, meaningful relationships between students and CSC's team were significant for students. Meaningful relationships were described by students according to care and accountability. When asked, students described the notion of 'care' as them feeling prioritized, humanized, supported to overcome challenges, and allyship from Ms. Sadie. Most often, students felt as if she and Ms. Sunshine were the only people in LHS exhibiting this sort of relationship with them. This findings regarding students' experiences of uncaring environments are consistent with research that examines schooling for Black students. Black students often report uncaring school environments and desire better relationships with adults (Lee, 1999). Given this, students connection to CSC's team which was rooted in the development of caring relationships is significant. Further, Ms. Sunshine and Ms. Sadie enforced accountability with their students regarding their educational, social, and emotional goals.

Students shared that Ms. Sadie held them to high expectations which was inconsistent with their broader perception of LHS's staff and culture. Ms. Sunshine attributed this difference to limitations in staff training and a difference in pedagogical practices amongst CSC's facilitators and LHS's staff more broadly. Research supports that when Black students are held to higher expectations they perform better on academic measures and increase their senses of belonging within their school environment (Milner, 2012). Deficit-based views, however, has detrimental effects on student's investment in their education (Green T. L., 2015). Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine held students accountable to their goals which in turn made them invested in their learning experiences accordingly. Students reported this as a strength of their involvement in the partnership, as many of them noted that without the accountability and 'push' from Ms. Sadie

they would not be as invested in their education as they were. Recall Jac who shared how Ms. Sadie pushed her to achieve her goals so that she could play on the sports team.

I wouldn't have had somebody pushing me besides, really, my eligibility card to get my grades up because I would just sit there and probably sleep. But she was always like, "You need to get this done. You need to get this done. I'll help you with this if you need it." If she wasn't there, I probably wouldn't have passed my classes or have had the outlets that I've had or the opportunities that I've had."

Jac felt that before Ms. Sadie she was struggling and was unmotivated however by having someone to empower her and hold her accountable to her goals, she was able to achieve her standards for her eligibility card. James was another student who discussed how Ms. Sadie was critical to him being able to pass his classes given his reluctance to communicate with his teachers due to a deficit rooted conversation he had with a prior teacher. When I asked what made this relationship different, he stated "she doesn't judge" referring to Ms. Sadie.

These findings are consistent with literature that discusses student-centered partnerships where family and community partnerships aim to address the specific needs and aspirations of students while valuing their experiential knowledges (Baquedano-Lopez & Hernandez, 2013; Johnson, 2007; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). Ms. Sadie was providing care that was non-homogenous and met the needs of each student. The approach taken by CSC is important when engaging in reform in Black schools. Policy and reform initiatives are often critiqued for homogenous assumptions regarding Black students' experiences and are therefore not responsive to their needs (Hordford & Sampson, 2014). Further, top-down reform initiatives are often decontextualized however students explained contextually relevant support from CSC's facilitators (Pazey, Cole, & Spikes, 2017). These are strengths of CSC's involvement with

LHS'S students however, they also present knowledge of drawbacks given students heavily reliance on Ms. Sadie.

Students' sole reliance on CSC's team to achieve goals related to their academic, social, and emotional development has drawbacks and speaks to the efficacy of CSC's work within LHS. According to their theory of change, the central goal of CSC was to foster students' development of skills that allows them to be successful toward reduced behavioral infractions and increased academics. These skills were rooted in academic, social, and emotional competencies. However, when I asked students about their development of these skills, they mentioned that they only utilize what they work on with CSC when they are with Ms. Sadie. Students also expresses a desire to only work with her when they face hardship at LHS and that if she was to exit the school's community, they were not confident in their ability to do well. For example, James shared the following comment.

"The things that would change really if she wasn't at the school is I'd probably be in trouble more than if she was in the school. Most of the time if I get irritated or something, that's somebody I can go to and talk to and get advice and stuff, and I take that and use that in a good way. Without her help I would probably get in trouble like I used to because there is no one else for real."

James's feelings regarding his ability to do well is rooted in siloed, or compartmentalized practices within LHS that challenges the efficacy of CSC. Ms. Sadie offers a sense of security, or a safe haven, that James largely attributes to his success at LHS. This is so much that he attaches his ability to utilize the skills attained through the partnership to Ms. Sadie. This could have detrimental effects on students' education if Ms. Sadie, or CSC entirely, were to exit LHS. This speaks to the compartmentalization of students' experiences where, as an organization LHS and

CSC are engaging with students differently. Recall Ms. Sadie's centrality of students voices in shaping their support as compared to LHS. The partnership shapes goals according to students' voices while LHS utilizes different, and often policy mandated standards to shape students' experiences.

Having consulted students at the start of the school year, CSC was able to have a better understanding of the needs of LHS as perceived by students. Mitra (2009) talks about the power of student-adult relationships as imperative to strengthening initiatives that are taking place in schools. Further, research asserts that in predominantly Black and urban schools' students navigate their environments more intricately and identify issues that adults are unable to (Rubin & Jones, 2007). This was true with LHS which helped CSC's team to better tailor their support. When I asked Ms. Sadie about the role of students in shaping the services offered by CSC, she stated, "I feel like the students' voice is what gave me a glimpse into the real Lake HS..." and continued to speak of their centrality in shaping the partnership's goals. This contrasts with Ms. Sunshine's explanation of LHS's opportunities for student voice. She shared,

"I do know we have student council. I do know we have yearbook. I do know we have, you know, the vice president's initiative and all that stuff. I do know they are more than welcome to speak at board meetings. I also know that I don't know how well it's being disseminated to students."

She later discussed student's gravitation to the partnership's team because of their ability to 'see' and 'hear' students, implying genuine engagement with students regarding their needs at LHS. She discussed this in opposition to LHS's normative culture, which reifies fragmented practices amongst staff.

Relationship building with CSC's team was significant for the ways that students made meaning of their experiences. While students discussed these in contradiction to normative student-adult relationships at LHS, adults also shared some important context regarding organizational components that influenced students' perceptions. Given these, more attention is needed to the fragmentation that occurs when partnerships are created in urban schools without attending to a need for organizational cohesion. Students' discussion of meaningful relationships contributed knowledge regarding the importance of student-adult connection for their academic, social, and emotional development in schools. However, LHS does not have an environment conducive to meaningful student-adult relationships from students' perspectives. Students expressed perpetual harm by adults, practices, and policies in LHS and the power of their caring and asset-driven relationships with CSC as a mechanism for mitigating those. Therefore, students are seeing CSC's team as in opposition to LHS staff. This can undermine the efficacy of CSC and LHS's staff, all while adversely affecting student's ability to succeed. Students' reluctance to form relationships with teachers and additional LHS staff given their preference for Ms. Sadie limits their support networks within LHS, including with staff who may benefit students in areas that Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine cannot. Also, students' perceptions may diminish the authority of their teachers where students may not see them or their instruction as pertinent to their academic success. This fragmentation that is occurring amongst CSC and LHS is disintegrating students views of 'community' within their school as opposed to bringing it together as a purpose of school, community, and family partnerships. This, therefore, undermines the potential for this strategy as a mechanism of reform overall.

Interconnecting Students' Schools and Home Spaces

Students also made meaning of their experiences based on CSC's ability to meet their needs across their home and school environments. The contextual knowledge possessed by community members who partner with schools is commonly understood as a strength of school-community partnerships (Green T. L., 2018). In the CSC-Lake HS partnership the facilitators possessed contextual knowledge of the out-of-school challenges faced by students and their families. They were familiar with local, community organizations and strategized to collate relationships and bring more resources to LHS students and families. This is consistent with the literature regarding the use of school-community partnerships to reform schools (Yull, Blitz, Thompson, & Murray, 2014). CSC even adopted practices of more comprehensive models and collaborated to form events that positioned LHS as a hub for the community (Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine organized several events that positioned LHS as a hub for services to be received by students, families, and community members. CSC fostered relationships with police departments, yoga studios, churches, local governments, mental health organizations, local colleges and universities, and local businesses upon other entities to address the needs of students and to attend to their desires for enriched learning experiences. Here, CSC is acting as a broker of networks of social capital as described by Green (2018). He describes the potential for school, community, and family partnerships to bridge networks of social capital to assist schools to increase their ability to meet the needs of students and families (Green T. L., 2018; Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). Even more, they partnered with local institutions demonstrating asset-driven perspectives of LHS's students and community. Given the significance of public schools in urban communities as seminal institutions, CSC's ability to position LHS as a hub for additional resources is substantial for students and their families

(Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). Also, given the exclusionary relationships that exists between LHS, and its families CSC's execution of these events demonstrated an attempt to reinstate LHS as a resource to its community.

While this is a salient finding amongst research that examines partnerships, what students contributed here was their gratitude for CSC's emphasis on immediately fulfilling their needs with the notion that they could not perform academically otherwise. For example, Jac shared how she would be unable to focus because her family had limited access to food until she met Ms. Sadie. She then shared that when she had explained to Ms. Sadie that she did not have much food at home and was frequently hungry Ms. Sadie provided a remedy to the situation by the next day. Like most of the students, Jac emphasized Ms. Sadie's urgency and consistency providing her with the things she needed to be present in school. Devin shared similar reflections and attributes the wellness of her family to Ms. Sadie's help. She then shared that given her families stability and access to needed resources she can better focus on her school-related responsibilities. These students identified how their home-related challenges spilled into their ability to 'be' while in school and the significance of having someone to assist them while in both environments. However, they also positioned the help that Ms. Sadie provided in opposition with that of their teachers. Students were aware that the intricacy of Ms. Sadie's involvement with them and their families was related to her formal position at LHS. Still, students saw this experience as compartmentalized.

In part, students felt this way because in addition to providing them access to needed resources they could also communicate with CSC in school about home related challenges. Devin spoke about how because Ms. Sadie knew she was going through things at home the support she provided in school was more responsive. This speaks to the literature that advocates

for partnerships to create more culturally responsive school environments (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). Family and community partners are often mindful of extant issues in the surrounding environment and can tailor their support accordingly. For example, they may act as a liaison between students, families and personnel as Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine did give the context they have. With partners who work in community serving organizations, they may possess resources already to immediately be able to help students and their families as some issues arise like CSC was able too (Valli, Stefanski, & Reuben, 2016). Ultimately, students' experiences did support the findings of existing research that states the ability of partnerships to provide responsive support to stakeholders (Khalifa, 2012). Students experiences however, contributes knowledge about how this work helps them to succeed in their schooling environments.

Interpretation of Findings: Employing a Black Critical Epistemological Lens

While the stated findings discussed students' interactions with CSC's facilitators and the effects Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine had on their educational experiences, this section provides an interpretation of findings from a systemic level using a Black critical epistemological perspective. Entering this study, I relied on theories of student voice including *youth participatory action research* (YPAR) and Mitra & Gross's (2009) *pyramid of student voice* which speaks to the possibilities of positioning students as researchers and leaders in urban school reform. These frameworks helped me to imagine how students might participate in this study to contribute to our understandings of school-community partnerships. While these frameworks speak to the necessity of the voices of students of color in educational leadership, employing a Black critical epistemology was necessary to interpret students' experiences in a way that challenged Eurocentric ideologies of education for Black students. This is given the

perpetual harm imposed on Black students and communities in an anti-Black educational system and their resistance to racialized treatment. A Black critical epistemology helps us to theorize about the imperativeness of ‘Black student voices’ as critical to the repurposing of school-community partnerships and to educational reform more broadly. Examining students’ explanations of their experiences with the LHS-CSC partnership from a Black epistemological lens adds context to the stated findings that should be considered when engaging in school-community partnerships in Black schools. These include the (1) anti-Blackness in schooling, (2) the reliance on partnerships as a means of abdicating responsibility from leaders and educators and (3) the overall importance of Black students voices in school reform. The interpretations of data as discussed in the following sections are intended to provide a critique of the systems that underly a need for school-community partnerships to combat racial inequity in education.

The Reinforcement of Anti-Blackness in U.S. Schools

While school-community partnerships are demonstratively helpful to students to mitigate access barriers to basic needs, health services, and educational enrichment, the field of educational leadership must acknowledge the fundamentally racist and discriminatory policies that creates these disparities. Further, we must understand how employing partnerships that are not equipped to challenge the conditions that reinforce these inequities risk perpetuating anti-Blackness in schools. Like many urban, predominantly Black districts, LHS had been consolidated twice due to accountability-based policies that forced schools into closure making LHS the only public high school in the area. However, LHS had not been equipped with the resources to adequately serve the increased number of students. Therefore, CSC’s main goal was to mitigate resource barriers for as many students as they could although they did have to capacity to help all students. These are underlying components that foregrounds the structure of

LHS and is an example of how schools are perpetually harmful to Black students. Scholars frequently discuss the disparity in which Black schools are closed, under-funded and are located in neighborhoods that have undergone long-term disinvestment (Khalifa & Gooden, 2016; Milner R. H., 2012). While school-community partnerships have demonstratively helped in lessening the effects of these inequities we must question if navigating barriers as opposed to strategically alleviating anti-Black educational policies and practices is substantial to improve education for Black students.

While CSC presents itself as an organization to help shift school culture, their engagement in LHS did not challenge, or empower students to challenge, rules and school conditions that students felt were adversely affecting their learning. Also, the partnership did not explicitly interrogate the deficit treatment that students experienced from educators and additional school staff which created distrusting student-adult dynamics and adverse relationships between LHS and students' families and communities. The conditions of LHS as expressed by students and the facilitators are consequences of anti-Blackness, which often creates unwelcoming and unsafe environments for Black children (Dumas, 2016). Given CSC's emphasis on social-emotional learning to create welcoming, safe, and productive school cultures their inability to empower students to challenge LHS's anti-Black conditions that contributed to students' behaviors and achievement, and to school-community relationships demonstrates an inefficacious ability to authentically improve students schooling. Further, it suggests that the organizational ideologies that shaped their engagement may be consistent with normative, Eurocentric notions of education given their alignment with LHS's organizational goals. Ultimately, CSC, while intended to improve school culture, acted as a mediator in which they provided access to needed resources but also unintentionally encouraged student's assimilation

to LHS's policies despite student's opposition to the treatment of educators, school staff, and unengaging learning conditions.

Understanding the role of anti-Blackness in the construction of schooling is fundamental for communities, educators, researchers, and policy makers roles in repurposing partnerships that do not reinforce anti-Blackness in schools. Given the resources, knowledges, and relationships to students and families that community partners may bring into schools, they are uniquely positioned to empower stakeholders to interrogate the conditions that creates anti-Black learning environments for Black youth (Green, 2018). In this study, this is evidenced by the relationships that students and their families had with Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine which strongly influenced their attitudes towards their learning, decision-making, and development. The strong reliance on Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine also suggests that they can potentially act as bridge between schools, families, and communities to disrupt LHS's environment to become responsive to students and their families, and thus help to disrupt normative social relations between LHS and the community. While this charge is not solely upon CSC's organization, community partners share the responsibility with school leaders to disrupt the effects of top-down policy by empowering students, their families, communities, and educators to acknowledge and change anti-Black policy and practice. The perpetuation of anti-Blackness reinforces the absolved responsibility of school decision makers to undo the effects of inequitable treatment imposed on Black schools.

The Transference of Responsibility from Educators and Leadership

CSC's presence at LHS removed the responsibility of educators and decision makers to create an equitable and responsive school environment for students. CSC was intended to facilitate needed resources to students and their families to improve their performance on

standardized academic measures. Given that policy makers and LHS's principals and teachers felt that by solely addressing social barriers attributed to families' socio-economic status students would then succeed, it is evident that they were unacknowledging of the functions of racism in schools. Consequently, it was expected of students to conform to the culture of LHS and CSC's responsibility to aid in students' assimilation which undermined the potential of the partnership to create a responsive and affirming school culture. The abdicated responsibility of decision makers and educators resulted in the over reliance of CSC and exposed the meritocratic and deficit-oriented ideals of students held by adults.

Milner (2012) discussed the prevalence of educators to attribute academic disparities to student's socio-economic status which was consistent with the documents analyzed and in student's interviews. Attributing the academic challenges of Black students to socio-economic disparities provides space for educators to place blame on students and their families instead of the policies that creates inequitable educational opportunities (Milner R. , 2012). Thus, educators develop deficit views of students where they assume that students are disinterested in their education, incapable of meeting high expectations, and possess knowledge that is deficient for decision making (Milner, 2012; Mark & Gooden, 2016). In this study, students often perceived that educators possessed deficit perceptions of them and therefore demonstrated a refusal to engage with adults and continually endure harm. For example, Devin discussed how she knew teachers perceived her as disinterested in her education although she was experiencing homelessness and food insecurity however, she did not explain her living circumstances because no one cared to ask. James shared that after receiving a comment from a teacher that made him feel 'stupid' he stopped relying on his teachers for help. These students' experiences due to educator's deficit and meritocratic assumptions increased their reliance on CSC's team as Ms.

Sadie and Ms. Sunshine held students to higher expectations and incorporated their voices in their engagement. However, while Ms. Sadie and Ms. Sunshine created a difference in students educational experiences the partnership's efficacy was limited give the emphasis on resource provision and mis acknowledgement of race as fundamental to student's experiences.

While LHS's students did express a need for the social and mental health resources facilitated by CSC, by not acknowledging the role of race in creating the inequities that exists in LHS's learning environment policy makers, school leaders, and educators are able to continually abdicate responsibility. For example, when Devin and James noted that their teachers were perceptively uncaring and discouraging which inhibited their willingness to engage in their classes. The feelings expressed by students in these instances were less about resources and more about their teacher's refusal to acknowledge their biased treatment towards them based on assumptions of intellectual inferiority. This is a common challenge faced by Black students in school (Dumas, 2016). In acknowledging the role of race as fundamental to the disparities in the quality of education for Black students all stakeholders must become accountable and committed to restructuring their school spaces beyond the facilitation of resources. The use of school-community partnerships then must be reconceptualized to aid in dismantling racist structures where organizations partner with school leaders and educators to reposition schools as community institutions driven by the knowledges of students, parents, and its' members to challenge Eurocentric ideals of education (Khalifa, 2012).

Scholars suggest that strong leadership is necessary to repurpose partnerships for the reconstruction of school organizations (Green, 2018; Johnson, 2007). Khalifa (2012) demonstrated a need for principals to reposition their roles, presence in, and relationships with Black communities to resituate school-community relations, and to increase the efficacy of

stakeholder collaboration. CSC lacked principal guidance which presented as a barrier to effective collaboration between CSC and LHS's staff. Also, findings indicate that LHS regarded CSC solely as a student support organization however, CSC names itself as an organization geared towards whole school change. In her interview, Ms. Sadie communicated that LHS's principal had delegated the responsibility of partnership oversight to Ms. Sunshine and was expectant that they would mainly facilitate necessary resources. If CSC were brought into LHS under leadership that committed to utilizing their services to create change amongst structural barriers to student's education, then their impact may have been more widespread.

In proving that resource barriers were being alleviated at LHS the administration was able to portray effort in the improvement of inequitable school conditions. This is despite the partnership's inability to assist all students in the building, challenge racist policies and practices, and improve school-family dynamics given their limited capacity. These are essential components of restructuring education for Black students as anti-Black policies, practices, and school-family dynamics affects the development, mobility, and well-being of Black students in U.S. education (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). These findings have implications for the use of partnerships as a mandated and voluntary reform strategy in Black schools, and the role of school leaders to foster a shared commitment amongst school staff and community partners. Most important however, is the centrality of Black students' voices as we must understand their experiences, forms of resistance, desires, and increase their capacities to curate this knowledge for leadership (Warren & Coles, 2020).

The Importance of Black Students Voices in Educational Reform

Students' voices are necessary for any form of educational reform including the use of school-community partnerships. Black students possess a unique perspective as U.S. schools are

fundamentally dehumanizing and disaffirming of Black youth, but they have persisted to resist and respond to school environments that enact racialized harm (Bertrand, 2014). In a recent seminar, Duncan-Andrade (2021) named Black and Indigenous students as the most vulnerable and wounded populations of students and that we must begin to reconstruct schooling *with* them before we can improve education for additional groups of children. Additional scholars agree by suggesting that if we improve education for Black students then educators possess the tools to improve education for all students (Mohammad & Haddix, 2016; Price-Dennis, Womack, McArthur, & Haddix, 2017). Black students possess intimate knowledge of U.S. educational systems and of the effects of racist policy implementation that often results in the disinvestment and closure of their schools (Bertrand, 2014). However, educational leaders and policy makers often overlook the knowledges of Black students to reshape schools and additional educational spaces (Coles, 2020).

In this study, students named conditions of LHS that were inherently racist including inadequate resources, teacher shortages, irrelevant curriculum, and unkept learning environments which are all results of political and economic disinvestment (Coles, 2020). Also, a large percentage of LHS's student population had recently undergone a school closure despite community opposition which communicates the perceived disposability of Black bodies. Further, these students expressed experiencing placed-blame for their inability to academically succeed given their social circumstances, or their unwillingness to engage due to biased and deficit treatment. Students' observations and ability to acknowledge the racist conditions of LHS demonstrates that Black youth possess knowledge of the social context that creates their experiences, and they are aware that their experiences are different than non-Black, adequately funded schools. Having this vantage point, Black students are demonstrably motivated to

challenge the unjust conditions of their schools and are most powerful when their voices are centered (Mauldin, 2021).

Black students' voices in educational reform are imperative for students' trajectories beyond the reconstruction of U.S. schooling, however educational policies are foundational for the assimilation of Black bodies and minds into eurocentrism (Dumas & Ross, 2016). For example, exclusionary discipline policies most adversely affect Black students which increases their likelihood of imprisonment, commonly known as the school-prison pipeline (Morris, 2015). Also, policies that defund schools and result in limited academic and social resources have direct effects on the social mobility and the post-secondary opportunities of low-income, Black students (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). Lastly, curricular decisions that highlight the true histories of Black communities are often subpar compared to eurocentric depictions of the formation of U.S. contexts which inhibits students' social-emotional development (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Williams, 2019). These examples of policy decisions are rooted in racist depictions of Blackness and were all present in the culture of LHS. However, as found in this study, the inequities that are a result of such policies are frequently framed as socio-economically rooted. The continued implementation of these and similar policies are a consequence of not centering Black students' voices in reform decisions, but instead acting *for* them through exclusionary decision making.

Audre Lorde (1984) notably stated "For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change." This quote is expressive of the urgency for Black students to have voice in reconstructing educational spaces to serve them. The consequences of continually excluding Black students will result in more reform decisions that reinforce anti-

Black policies and practices. CSC, even if inadvertently, reinforced anti-Black relations amongst students, parents, and communities by being positioned to serve students in a way that helped them align to the culture of LHS. This is instead of leveraging their relationship with families, and communities to empower students to challenge the staff and leadership of LHS to adapt to their needs and desires. Black students are infrequently collaborators in dismantling the structural components of their schools but as students in this study indicated, they are desire change. The magnitude of knowledge possessed by Black students is incalculable however, it is necessary that we purpose it for the disruption and reformation of U.S. education systems.

Implications for Research, Practice and Policy

Implications for Future Research

The use of school-community partnerships is largely present in the literature of educational leadership and urban school reform. However, more exemplars are needed that (1) demonstrates the implementation of partnerships who intend to restructure schools in the best interest of Black youth and (2) that incorporates the voices Black youth. This study brought forth the voices of Black students to understand how an urban, school-community partnership was affecting their school experiences. In employing a Black critical epistemological lens, I found that while the partnership was meeting its immediate goals of facilitating resources to families critically in need, they were inefficacious at improving the overall culture of LHS. This is because school culture is currently aligned with eurocentric norms of the operationalization of schooling however, for Black students this often means navigating disaffirming and dehumanizing school environments (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016).

Scholars communicate the potential of partnerships to thoroughly effect change in urban schools and communities given their ability to be contextually responsive (Green & Gooden,

2014). However, these were often illuminated under school leaders who recognized the role of race in normative school-community relationships in Black neighborhoods (Khalifa, 2012). My findings suggests that without a particular lens to race, school-community partnerships may be inefficacious at thoroughly improving students learning experiences and may inadvertently reinforce anti-Blackness in schools. Unfortunately, I was unable to speak with the principal of LHS to understand her perspective regarding race and the role of anti-Blackness in schools, but I am aware that she provided little oversight of the partnership. The perspective of educational leaders on the role of race in the construction of contemporary school conditions and of student voice is important for creating partnerships that can genuinely improve students schooling. However, more research is needed to understand how principals might carry out this work. Also, more research is needed to understand the role that Black students can play in helping the field to reconceptualize partnerships as a reform's strategy given their intricate navigation of their school spaces. The youth in this study expressed several ways CSC's expanded services could benefit additional students at LHS. However, we must put them in positions to be heard and collaborated with.

Implications for Practice

Black Student Voice

In the field of educational leadership more work is needed to adequately prepare aspiring leaders to center the voices of Black students in a way that shapes school environments. Further, school leaders must foster school environments that are centered on the continuous inclusion of Black youth's voices as their needs and experiences change with transitions in their social contexts. The findings in this study demonstrates the insignificant efforts of school staff to encourage youth participation to improve their learning and LHS's broader environment. In

centering the voices of students, school leaders must work to shift normative dynamics between educators and Black youth that are deficit rooted. This also requires a reprioritization of principal efforts where they are more engaged in creating on the ground, equitable environments for youth. In a broader sense, this work requires the reconceptualization of the education of Black students. As a field, educational leadership must emphasize the disruption of the fundamentally racist and exclusionary policies and structures that inhibits the inclusiveness of Black students voices as knowledge producers and change agents. Currently, education is structured to maintain the social position of Black youth, their families, and communities however school leaders working in urban context must commit to practices that challenge the status quo (Horsford, Scott, & Anderson, 2019). In incorporating Black students' voices youth are equipped with leadership and agency competencies that has substantial effects on the educational trajectories and social mobility of them, their families, and communities.

Culturally Responsive School-Community Partnerships

In relying on school-community partnerships to help improve school environments, principal leadership is necessary to ensure shared commitments and pedagogies of all involved stakeholders. Also, in implementing partnerships school leaders must ensure adequate student representation to ensure that the partnership remains student centered and less on adult centered goals. Alike with school leaders, community partners who intend to engage in Black schools must possess an understanding that schooling in its current inception is dehumanizing to Black students, their families, and communities (Dumas, 2016). As found in this study, community partners hold critical knowledge, skills, and relatability to students and their families making them invaluable for the reorienting of social relations between Black schools and the communities they serve. However, it is crucial that community partners act in the best interest of students and acknowledge

the ways that race, and racism create adverse educational and social conditions for Black youth. Also, given the reliance of students on community partners that are engaging in schools they hold a responsibility to challenge known structures that are affecting student's ability to develop academically, emotionally, and socially.

A benefit of community partners in schools is their ability to bridge in-school and out-of-school contexts to assist schools in contributing to the holistic wellness of students. Community partners possess networks of individuals and organizations that can be leveraged to shift the minds of school leaders, educators and decision makers while also addressing resource disparities for students (Green, 2018). However, this requires partnerships to be truly student centered and acknowledging of the ways schools enact harm onto communities. Otherwise, partners risk undesired consequences such as those faced by CSC's team. These included becoming over capacitated, inadvertently aligning to school-centered goals, and being unchanging of biased school-family dynamics. A first step towards improving partnerships in practice might include establishing clear expectations for collaboration and intent of student centeredness with school leaders. It is fair to assume that both, school leaders and community partners, may be unknowing of how to actively work to create affirming schools for Black youth however, this reinforces the importance of genuine collaboration and shared leadership from all stakeholders with Black students voices at the center.

Implications for Policy

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) have partnership agreements with 34 schools however, the findings of this study demonstrate a limited oversight of their implementation which undermines their potential. CSC did not possess the capacity to provide intensive services to more than 25 students per academic year. Also, the attachment of school-

community partnerships to accountability standards may undermine the potential of community partners to collaborate with educators in a way that genuinely improves students learning conditions. The lack of oversight communicates the failure of policy makers to adequately ensure that school-community partnerships are improving school conditions for students. In mandating partnerships, the MDE should provide financial incentive to ensure that organizations can fulfill the large number of inequities in partnership schools. Otherwise, their efforts are insufficient.

Another implication of this study is situated in the question of if school-community partnerships should be mandated as a means of pushing schools to reach academic accountability standards. Given the findings of this study, students experiences have demonstrated that partnerships with the intent of aligning them to school-centered goals reinforces anti-Black norms in education and do not create humanizing and affirming learning environments. When creating policies, it is critical that adults stop acting for students and include them in decision making spaces. Further, it is necessary that policy makers acknowledge and become accountable for the ways that they perpetuate racial inequities in schools. The disinvestment of Black schools and communities cannot be supplemented with the implementation of partnerships alone. Schools require funding and policy that addresses the effects of previous and critical policy decisions that have created the issues that partnerships are intended to mandate. Policy needs to be influenced by those who are most directly affected by their implementation, Black students.

Conclusion

This qualitative, phenomenological study examined the experiences of Black students who were receiving services from a school-community partnership in an urban, predominantly Black school. The partnership assisted students in navigating LHS's environment by providing resources and students built meaningful relationships with CSC's team which was contradictory

to normative relationships with other adults in the building. While students praised their relationships with the organization's facilitators however, they shared experiences which suggests that the partnership was ineffectual at improving their entire school environment. Findings from interviews, documents, and focus groups indicate that limited principal oversight, the partnership mandate from MDE, and the perpetuation of normative, anti-Black student-adult and school-family relationships inhibited the partnership's ability to improve the boarder school culture. The partnership was also implemented in a way that did not empower students to challenge their school's environment and that aligned with school-centered goals. These barriers to the partnership's student-centered implementation created unintended consequences that challenges the extent to which partnerships are *the* strategy for urban school reform. Additionally, the implications of this study suggest a need for more research, practice and policy that allows for the creation of culturally responsive school-community partnerships to foster affirmative school environments for Black youth. Lastly, I assert that Black students' voices must be central to the use of partnerships and additional reforms in their school spaces.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Student Interview Protocol

Semi-Structured Student Interview protocol:

1. Thank you for agreeing to do this interview.
2. Introduce myself: Who am I and What we are doing here
3. Consent form review
4. Ask students for a pseudonym
5. Being interview

Get to know you:

1. How long have you attended LHS? What grade are you in?
2. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
3. Were you apart of any teams/clubs at school?
 - a. If yes, what is your favorite thing about it?
 - b. If no, what do you enjoy doing for fun? Are you looking forward to anything over the holiday break?
4. Can you tell me how you identify? [racially/ethnically? What are your preferred pronouns? Etc.]

Interview Questions:

1. What is it like being a [10th OR 11th] grader at your school? [i.e., What types of classes are offered? What kind of leadership opportunities do you have? What are some things you have experienced that makes this year different than last?]
2. How would you describe the environment at your school? [i.e., How are the teachers? How are the students? What does a typical day look like for you?] ...What are some things you enjoy about school? *Probes:* favorite classes, in-school/after-school activities, friends, etc.
3. Can you tell me about what CSC/Ms. Sadie does [at your school]? How did you start working with them/her/him? [*Probe:* Can you tell me a story about how you got involved with them? Earliest memory?]
4. What types of things do they help you with? What are some goals you have when working with CSC/Ms. Sadie? Who makes the goals?
5. How do you choose what goals are created for you? What is a current thing that you are working on with CSC/Ms. Sadie? How was this goal set?
6. Are there things you wish they can help you with, but they do not/cannot?
7. What are some strengths of [good things about] their relationship with you? What are some areas where you feel their relationship with you could be improved? Why/how?
8. How well does Ms. Sadie get to know you? Do you think that they help you based on your own, specific needs?
9. Do you remember the question I asked about your identities? How much would you say that the CSC/Ms. Sadie respects your identities? Why? [What does respect mean?]
10. Can you tell me a story that gives me an understanding of your work and relationship with Ms. Sadie? Take some time to think and give me a story that really explains the help she gives you. [i.e., What is a memorable moment between you two? Tell me about something that you went through where she gave you the most support? When is a time when she was there for you but your teachers, etc. was not?]

11. If CSC/Ms. Sadie were not working in your school, do you think your experience would be different? How/why?
12. How do you think Ms. Sadie could make your entire school better [if they were able to help more students]?
13. What does it mean to be a leader? Do you feel like you are a leader in your school now? How/why [not]?
14. [Given what you mentioned about being a leader] If given the opportunity, what would you work with Ms. Sadie to change in your school? [Like as a high schooler]?
15. Ms. Sadie wants to start an alumni program where when students graduate from LHS they would come back and help Ms. Sadie/CSC to help other students like they helped you. Would you be interested in doing something like this?
16. What would you help students with if you were to work with Ms. Sadie as an alum? Why? How?
17. Is there anything you would like to share regarding your experience with CSC/Ms. Sadie that I have not asked about?
18. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about anything at all that we have discussed in this interview?

APPENDIX B: Focus Group #1

Introduction/Rapport	<p>Hello everyone. I hope you all remember me as I know I did some of your interviews about a month or so ago. I want to thank you all for being here and participating in this focus group. As you may recall we are hoping to do 2 or 3 of these over the next few weeks depending on how this one goes.</p> <p>In this focus group, I am going to ask you more about some of the things that you mentioned in your interviews with me. Specifically, about how your work with Ms. Sadie has impacted your experiences at LHS.</p> <p>[REVIEW OF SUMMARIZED FINDINGS – DEIDENTIFIED]</p> <p>We will use two strategies to talk with each other. The first is ‘storytelling’ – which if you remember in your interviews, I asked a few questions that started like ‘tell me a story when...’ The second is dialogue. Does anyone know what this means? This means that you will have a conversation and build upon what each other is saying. So, for example, if one person says ‘I remember a time when I was skipping class and Ms. Sadie encouraged me to return to class by doing XYZ’ if you have a story or comment related to this like ‘oh yeah! Something similar happened to me... or my experience with that was different’ feel free to jump right in and say it. I will not call on you or make you raise your hands. We are all here to talk freely.</p> <p>Does this make sense? Do you have any questions for me?</p> <p>Ask students to grab paper and pencils/pens.</p>
Confidentiality Statement/Ground Rules	<p>So, first I want us to establish some community agreements [explain what these are]. I have a few but I also want to open the floor to you all to set some agreements as well.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What we say here is confidential. I want you all to speak freely and honestly. 2. We are going to respect each other. 3. Everyone speaks – I may call on you if you are not saying much just to hear your thoughts on the topic. If you don’t feel comfortable just jumping in feel free to raise your hands. 4. Think as big as you like about some of the questions asked and feel free to be creative no matter what. 5. If you need clarification on something, please ask. <p>What agreements do you suggest? What questions do you have for me right now?</p>

Participant Introductions	<p>Okay, so before we get started, I want everyone to say their names - pseudonyms – their grade, your favorite thing about yourself and what your superpower would be and why. Does anyone want to go first? If not, I will go!</p>
Warm Up Activity (5-10 minutes)	<p>I want to begin with a warmup activity. I asked everyone to grab some paper and a pen. Do you have one?</p> <p>Okay, now I want you to really think before beginning the activity. I want each of you to either draw a picture or write words – a poem, rap, free write, speech, etc. – about a time that Ms. Sadie helped you with something that was very important to you. This can be an in school or out of school situation. This will be shared FYI.</p> <p>Be as detailed as possible about the situation – without saying anyone’s names or disclosing information that you want to keep private – the feelings it gave you, how it influenced your relationship with Ms. Sadie and how the situation turned out. Feel free to get really creative!</p>
Activity Probing Questions	<p>Now, I want each of you to take turns sharing what you wrote or drew. Also, hold it up to the camera because I am going to take a snapshot for my records.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What about that experience was important to you? 2. What did Ms. Sadie do to help you feel supported? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Is there something you wish she would have done different to improve/change the outcome? 3. What was the outcome? 4. What about this experience made you continue to work with her? 5. What did you learn in that moment? 6. Has this issue arisen again? How have you taken what you learned and handled it appropriately?
Making meaning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Think about the situations you all just described. How do you think it would have gone differently if Ms. Sadie was not there? 2. What kinds of supports and resources exist in your schools that you would’ve relied on? 3. What are some additional challenges in your schools that you think can be addressed if more students had the help Ms. Sadie gives you? 4. Based on the challenges discussed, what are some possible solutions you can think of? – these can be as wild and creative as you want.
Reimagining	<p>FG #1 – What are some additional things, based on your own experiences at LHS, that you wish you could receive help with? [From Ms. Sadie or anyone at all.]</p>

	<p>1. <i>Probing</i> – What about with teachers? Friends? Families? Extracurriculars? Skill development? Leadership? Mental Health?</p>
Closing	<p>Is there anything else I should know about anything we discussed here today?</p> <p>Is there anything you want to share that you haven't shared today or that hasn't been talked about?</p> <p>Thank you for sharing today – Confidentiality Reminder.</p>

APPENDIX C: Focus Group #2

Introduction/Rapport	<p>Hello everyone. It is great to see you again and thank you for returning!</p> <p>In this focus group, I am going to ask you questions about skills and leadership – so less about your experiences and more about the alumni group idea that we discussed before. Do you remember this? We will do an activity that will require use of your cell phone OR you can do this in a separate web browser on your computer. I will walk you through it. From there we will have a discussion and will take no longer than an hour of your time as promised.</p> <p>At the end of this group, I will collect your t-shirt sizes and gift card decision's. If you'd prefer to text these to Ms. Sadie, please let me know.</p> <p>Like last time, we will speak in a dialogue format meaning that you will have a conversation and build upon what each other is saying. So, for example, if one person says 'I used XYZ skills to do cope with my anger' if you have a story or comment related to this like 'oh yeah! Something similar happened to me... or my experience with that was different' feel free to jump right in and say it. I will not call on you unless I do not hear from you, nor will I make you raise your hands. We are all here to talk freely.</p> <p>Does this make sense? Do you have any questions for me?</p> <p>[REVIEW OF SUMMARIZED FINDINGS – DEIDENTIFIED]</p>
Confidentiality Statement/Ground Rules	<p>So, first I want us to review some of the community agreements and open the floor to you all to set some agreements as well.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. What we say here is confidential. I want you all to speak freely and honestly. 7. We are going to respect each other. 8. Everyone speaks – I may call on you if you are not saying much just to hear your thoughts on the topic. If you don't feel comfortable just jumping in feel free to raise your hands. 9. Think as big as you like about some of the questions asked and feel free to be creative no matter what. 10. If you need clarification on something, please ask. <p>What agreements do you suggest? What questions do you have for me right now?</p>

Participant Introductions	<p>Okay, so before we get started, I want everyone to say their names – or pseudonyms – again and tell me a short [~60 second] story about someone who you view as a leader in your school, family, social circle – friends, or community and what makes them a leader. It can also be yourself if you want. – May need to provide examples or more detail of expectations.</p>
Warm Up Activity (3-5 minutes)	<p>I want to begin with a warmup activity – per usual ☺</p> <p>Does everyone have their phones? Who is familiar with poll everywhere? – May need to provide more of an explanation.</p> <p>We are going to use this tool to answer this question: What are some skills Ms. Sadie has taught you [or you have learned] through working with her?</p> <p>Directions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take some time to think through this. This can be coping skills, school skills, social skills (like with friends and family), real life skills, etc. but I want you to be specific and think of as many as possible. Come up with one-word answers. 2. If you are using a phone – text BRIANACOLEMA617 to 22333 to join poll. 3. If you are using your computer – go to PollEv.com/brianacolema617 to join poll. 4. Once it says you have joined, begin typing the skills you listed in one-word answers one at a time. You can respond as many times as you like and can also repeat the answers you see up here. You can also use emojis. <p>Activate the 1st poll. Remember to deactivate once they are done.</p>
Activity Follow Up Questions/Leadership Discussion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Review skills listed. Have you used these when she is not around? – when/how? 8. Think about these and the story you told during the introductions. Does the leader you described have any of the listed skills/characteristics? How do you define leadership? – everyone provides input. 9. Okay, this is what I heard [paraphrase]. How can you use the skills you all mentioned to be a leader in your school and address some of the challenges or ideas you all mentioned last time? – provide reminders. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How would you find out what other students want to see changed in LHS? 10. As of now, how confident do you feel creating changes in your school?

	<p>11. Do you feel like other adults in the building would be in support of this? – like your principal? Who else?</p>
Reimagining/Closing Activity	<p>We are going to do one more activity before we wrap up.</p> <p>So, do you all remember when I told you about an alumni program that Ms. Sadie and her team wants to create? Provide a brief description but let students know it is still being planned and they are partaking in the planning process. This is the type of work you'd be doing but you'd actually be doing more action and less talking.</p> <p>This time I want you to answer the question of ‘what types of skills/support [or both] do need to feel confident about participating in CSC’s Alumni Program?’ & ‘what questions do you have about the Alumni Program or are things you would like to see happen once its created?’</p> <p>We will use ‘Jam Board’ for this. Are you familiar?</p> <p>Link: https://jamboard.google.com/d/1-CZZuj0TYe2g5dHaiC-oYfNzszdqYq0-lJ1BIWBdhrQ/viewer?f=0</p> <p>Every student will have a color assigned – you can choose, or I can choose:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Green – Yui 2. Blue – James 3. Yellow – Savy 4. Pink – Jac 5. Orange - Devin <p>We can talk about this out loud if you need to.</p> <p>Debrief – ask to follow up questions as necessary.</p>
Thinking Forward	<p>Next steps: I want to explain what I want to do next and give anyone the option to possibly participate.</p> <p>The final step of this is for me to provide a deidentified [meaning no names] summary of what we discussed to Ms. Sadie and her team to help create the alumni program. What I would like to do is create a presentation or document that sums up some of the suggestions and supports you all noted in the focus group. Does anyone want to help with that? It is not mandatory.</p> <p>In the meantime, I want everyone to go around and tell me one thing you learned, realized or remember from today’s discussion OR one</p>

	<p>thing you want me to remember about something we discussed [either today or during this entire process].</p>
Closing (ALL)	<p>Is there anything you want to share that you haven't shared today or that hasn't been talked about? Any questions for me?</p> <p>Send t-shirt sizes and gift card selections to Ms. Sadie. We will discuss how to distribute these. Thank you for sharing today. I have enjoyed meeting all of you! – Confidentiality Reminder.</p>

APPENDIX D: Adult Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

1. Can you talk to me about how CSC is situated within LHS? How do students get involved with CSC's services?
2. What do they provide to students and the larger environment? Have you seen improvements in the school culture?
3. What are some strengths of CSC at LHS?
4. Where do you think they can improve?
5. How would you describe students' experiences at LHS?
6. What opportunities are there for student voice and leadership?
7. How would you describe student-adult relationships?

APPENDIX E: Student Consent Form

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Study Title: “In Their Voices”: A Phenomenological Study Centering the Perspectives of Black Students in School-Community Partnerships

Researcher and Title: Briana Coleman; PhD Candidate

Department and Institution: Michigan State University; Department of Educational Leadership

Address and Contact Information:

Email: colem279@msu.edu

Phone: 586-443-1780 (Cell)

Office Address: TBD

Dissertation Supervisor: Terah Venzant-Chambers, PhD.

Email: terah@msu.edu

Phone: 517-884-4526 (Office)

Office Address: 404 Erickson Hall, 620 Farm Lane, East Lansing, MI 48824

1. BRIEF SUMMARY

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation including why you might or might not want to participate, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to discuss and ask the researchers any questions you may have.

You are being asked to participate in a research study of your experiences in the CSC partnership that is taking place at your school (LHS). Your participation in this study will take about 4 hours over the next few weeks, and no more than 1 hour per day that we interact. You will be asked to participate in 1-45-60-minute interview and 3-45-60-minute design sessions which will be focused on your experiences as a student who is involved in the aforementioned partnership. At the completion of the study, you will receive a \$20 gift card to a place of your choosing which will be delivered virtually.

The most likely risks of participating in this study are minimal as there are no foreseeable risks of participating in this study. You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to understanding the benefits and utility of school and community partnerships in schools.

2. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this research study is to understand how you and your fellow students are experiencing the partnership program that is established between LHS and CSC. Further, this study is intended to contribute to understandings regarding student voice and the utility of partnerships in urban school reform. This means that as a researcher, I am interested in understanding how if given the opportunity, students can improve the use of partnerships in schools or help adult stakeholders understand if partnerships are actually not as beneficial as we perceive. Given the importance of context, I will ask you

about experiences related to your racial and/or ethnic identities, and additional identities that you feel are important and that are relevant regarding the integration of the partnership into LHS's environment.

3. WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO

- As a part of this study, you are being asked to participate in one (1) 45-60-minute interview where you will be asked questions about the following:
 - your perceptions of their school environment
 - your experiences with, and perceptions of the case management program that is facilitated through CSC in their school
 - potential areas of need within your school that can be addressed by CSC or another partnership
 - overall, how your school's culture has been impacted by the case management component of the CSC partnership
- After interviews have been individually conducted with all student participants, you will then be asked to participate in two/three (2/3) 45-60-minute focus-group style sessions which will occur once per week for two/three weeks at a mutually agreed upon day and time.
 - In these sessions you will be asked to collaborate with myself and your fellow students to communicate your thoughts on CSC's desire to create an alumni program comprised of students who were involved during their high school years.
- You will have the opportunity to review any findings from the research to ensure the accuracy of any documented information.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- Your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of the benefits and utility of partnerships in schools from the student's perspectives. Their participation will increase the understandings of the school principal, organization and researcher regarding:
 - how to better assess student's needs
 - facilitate opportunities for improved student feedback
 - increase student engagement
 - provide appropriate services to students

POTENTIAL RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- The data for this project will be de-identified and stored on a password protected, secured platform. The researcher (Briana Coleman) is the only person who will have the password to access your data.
- Any paper documents will be stored in a locked cabinet and inaccessible by anyone but the researcher.
- The only people who will know that you are a part of this study is the researcher, you, other student participants, the school principal and the CSC facilitator.
- To ensure confidentiality when reporting, presenting or publishing research findings you will be asked to choose a pseudonym at the time of the interview to be attached to any data. The only person who will know the chosen pseudonym are you and the researcher.

YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

- Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
 - You have the right to say no.
 - You may change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study.
 - You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY

- For completed participation in this study you will receive a gift card totaling in \$20 to a place of your choosing.
- Complete participation includes the completion of:
 - One (1) virtual 45-minute interview
 - Three (3) virtual 45-minute design sessions

RESEARCH RESULTS

This study is intended to be student-centered and thus a large part of it requires the collaboration of the researcher and student participants. Therefore, I will provide you with, and give you the opportunity to confirm or refute the transcript and initial findings from our 1-on-1, 60-minute interview. These findings will then be used to structure the design sessions in which myself, you and the other student participants will create a presentation of findings to provide to your principal and CSC team. The purpose of this is to create a useful product from the research that will benefit you and ultimately your classmates who interact with the partnership in the future.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have concerns or questions about this study, contact the researcher or researcher's supervisor at:

Researcher:

Briana Coleman

Email: colem279@msu.edu

Phone: 586-443-1780 (Cell)

Researcher's Supervisor:

Terah Venzant-Chambers, PhD.

Email: terah@msu.edu

Phone: 517-884-4526 (Office)

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

9. AUDIO RECORDING OF INTERVIEW AND DESIGN SESSIONS

- Recorded interviews will be stored on a secure, password protected platform that is approved and only the researcher will have access to this information.
- I agree to allow audiotaping/videotaping of my interview.
☐ Yes ☐ No Initials _____
- I agree to allow audiotaping/videotaping of my participation in the design sessions.
☐ Yes ☐ No Initials _____

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

 Signature

Date

 Signature of Assenting Child (13-17; if appropriate)

Date

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

A signature is a required element of consent – if not included, a waiver of documentation must be granted by the IRB.

APPENDIX F: Parent Permission Form

PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent, parental permission and assent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Study Title: “In Their Voices”: A Phenomenological Study Centering the Perspectives of Black Students in School-Community Partnerships

Researcher and Title: Briana Coleman; PhD Candidate

Department and Institution: Michigan State University; Department of Educational Leadership

Address and Contact Information:

Email: colem279@msu.edu

Phone: 586-443-1780 (Cell)

Office Address: TBD

Dissertation Supervisor: Terah Venzant-Chambers, PhD.

Email: terah@msu.edu

Phone: 517-884-4526 (Office)

Office Address: 404 Erickson Hall, 620 Farm Lane, East Lansing, MI 48824

1. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

- Your child is being asked to participate in a research study about their experiences in the case management program between their school and the organization *Community in Schools* (CSC).
- Your child has been selected as a possible participant in this study because they were identified as an active student in the case management program by CSC’s program coordinator.
- From this study, the researchers hope to learn how increasing the role students’ voices within partnerships between schools, communities and families can improve the effectiveness of partnerships at meeting student needs.
- Your child’s participation in this study will take about 3-4 hours in total. This time will occur over three/four (3/4) 45-60-minute virtual sessions including one (1) 1-on-1 interview with myself and two/three (2/3) 45-minute long focus group sessions.
- This study is occurring collaboratively with myself, the organization *Communities in Schools* and *Pontiac High School*.

2. WHAT YOU AND YOUR CHILD WILL DO

- Aside from providing permission, you (the parent) do not have any responsibilities within the research study.
- As a part of this study, your child is being asked to participate in one (1) 45-60-minute interview where they will be asked questions about the following:
 - their perceptions of their school environment
 - their experiences with, and perceptions of the case management program that is facilitated as a partnership between CSC in their school (LHS).
 - potential areas of need within their schools that can be addressed by CSC or another partnership
 - overall, how their school has been positively impacted by the case management component of the CSC partnership.
- After interviews have been individually conducted with all student participants, your child will then be asked to participate in two/three (2/3) 45-60-minute focus-group style sessions which will occur once per week for two/three weeks at a mutually agreed upon day and time.
 - In these sessions your child will be asked to collaborate with myself and their fellow students to communicate your thoughts on CSC's desire to create an alumni program comprised of students who were involved during their high school years.
- Your child will have the opportunity to review any findings from the research to ensure the accuracy of any documented information.

3. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- You will not directly benefit from your child's participation in this study.
- However, your child's participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of the benefits and utility of partnerships in schools from the student's perspectives.
- Their participation will increase the understandings of the school principal, organization and researcher regarding:
 - how to better assess student's needs for the use of partnerships
 - facilitate opportunities for improved student feedback
 - increase student engagement in the program
 - provide appropriate services to students

4. POTENTIAL RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks associated with your child's participation in this study.

5. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- The data for this project will be de-identified and stored on a password protected, secured platform. The researcher (Briana Coleman) is the only person who will have the password to access your student's data.
- Any paper documents will be stored in a locked cabinet and inaccessible by anyone but the researcher.
- The only people who will know that your child is a part of this study is the researcher, you (the parent), other student participants, the school principal and the CSC facilitator.

- To ensure confidentiality when reporting, presenting or publishing research findings your child will be asked to choose a pseudonym at the time of the interview to be attached to any data. The only person who will know the chosen pseudonym are the researcher and your child.

6. YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

- Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you or your child are otherwise entitled.
- You may discontinue your child's participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you or your child are otherwise entitled.
 - You and your child have the right to say no.
 - You and your child may change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study.
 - You and your child may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

7. COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY

- For completed participation in this study your child will be receive a gift card totaling in \$20 to [TBD].
- Complete participation includes the completion of:
 - One (1) virtual 45-60-minute interview
 - Three/four (3/4) virtual 45-60-minute design sessions

8. CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have concerns or questions about this study, contact the researcher or researcher's supervisor at:

Researcher:

Briana Coleman

Email: colem279@msu.edu

Phone: 586-443-1780 (Cell)

Researcher's Supervisor:

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If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

9. AUDIO RECORDING OF INTERVIEW AND DESIGN SESSIONS

- Recorded interviews and design sessions will be stored on a secure, password protected platform that is approved and only the researcher will have access to this information.

- I agree to allow audiotaping/videotaping of my child's interview.

☐ Yes ☐ No Initials _____

- I agree to allow audiotaping/videotaping of my child's participation in the design sessions.

☐ Yes ☐ No Initials _____

10. DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.

Your signature below means that you voluntarily give your permission for your child to participate in this research study.

Signature

Date

Print

Date

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

A signature is a required element of consent – if not included, a waiver of documentation must be applied for.

APPENDIX G: Adult Consent Form

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Study Title: “In Their Voices”: A Phenomenological Study Centering the Perspectives of Students in School-Community Partnerships

Researcher and Title: Briana Coleman; PhD Candidate

Department and Institution: Michigan State University; Department of Educational Leadership

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5. BRIEF SUMMARY

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation including why you might or might not want to participate, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to discuss and ask the researchers any questions you may have.

You are being asked to participate in a research study about your perceptions of the CSC partnership that is taking place at your school (LHS). You will be asked to participate in 1-45-60-minute interview about how LHS’s school environment has been impacted by their work with students. Also, about student opportunities for student voice and leadership at LHS. At the completion of the study, you will receive a \$20 gift card to a place of your choosing which will be delivered virtually.

The most likely risks of participating in this study are minimal as there are no foreseeable risks of participating in this study. You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to understanding the benefits and utility of school and community partnerships in schools.

6. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this research study is to understand how you and your fellow students are experiencing the partnership program that is established between LHS and CSC. Further, this study is intended to contribute to understandings regarding student voice and the utility of partnerships in urban school reform. This means that as a researcher, I am interested in understanding how if given the opportunity, students can improve the use of partnerships in schools or help adult stakeholders understand if partnerships are actually not as beneficial as we perceive. Given the importance of context, I will ask you

about experiences related to your racial and/or ethnic identities, and additional identities that you feel are important and that are relevant regarding the integration of the partnership into LHS's environment.

7. WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO

- As a part of this study, you are being asked to participate in one (1) 45-60-minute interview where you will be asked questions about the following:
 - your perceptions of LHS's school environment and opportunities for student voice,
 - your experiences with, and perceptions of the case management program that is facilitated through CSC
 - overall, how your school's culture has been impacted by the case management component of the CSC partnership

8. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- Your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of the benefits and utility of partnerships in schools from the student's perspectives. Their participation will increase the understandings of the school principal, organization and researcher regarding:
 - how to better assess student's needs
 - facilitate opportunities for improved student feedback
 - increase student engagement
 - provide appropriate services to students

POTENTIAL RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- The data for this project will be de-identified and stored on a password protected, secured platform. The researcher (Briana Coleman) is the only person who will have the password to access your data.
- Any paper documents will be stored in a locked cabinet and inaccessible by anyone but the researcher.
- The only people who will know that you are a part of this study is the researcher, you, other student participants, the school principal and the CSC facilitator.
- To ensure confidentiality when reporting, presenting or publishing research findings you will be asked to choose a pseudonym at the time of the interview to be attached to any data. The only person who will know the chosen pseudonym are you and the researcher.

YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

- Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
 - You have the right to say no.
 - You may change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study.
 - You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION FOR BEING IN THE STUDY

- For completed participation in this study you will receive a gift card totaling in \$20 to a place of your choosing.

RESEARCH RESULTS

This study is intended to be student-centered and thus a large part of it requires the collaboration of the researcher and student participants. Therefore, I will provide you with, and give you the opportunity to confirm or refute the transcript and initial findings from our 1-on-1, 60-minute interview. These findings will then be used to structure the design sessions in which myself, you and the other student participants will create a presentation of findings to provide to your principal and CSC team. The purpose of this is to create a useful product from the research that will benefit you and ultimately your classmates who interact with the partnership in the future.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have concerns or questions about this study, contact the researcher or researcher's supervisor at:

Researcher:

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Terah Venzant-Chambers, PhD.

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If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

9. AUDIO RECORDING OF INTERVIEW AND DESIGN SESSIONS

- Recorded interviews will be stored on a secure, password protected platform that is approved and only the researcher will have access to this information.
- I agree to allow audiotaping/videotaping of my interview.
☐ Yes ☐ No Initials _____
- I agree to allow audiotaping/videotaping of my participation in the design sessions.
☐ Yes ☐ No Initials _____

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature _____

Date

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

A signature is a required element of consent – if not included, a waiver of documentation must be granted by the IRB.

APPENDIX H: Jam Board Artifact

Figure 6. FG #2 Exit Ticket



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