

Academic Enrichment Programs Supporting Students of Color in the U.S: Implications for

Human Services Practice

Human Service III Thesis

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Introduction

Education can be challenging for students of color in the United States due to systemic racism and discrimination. The system perpetuates inequality and disadvantages them. There are many barriers that impede students' academic success, including the lack of access to quality education and inadequate resources and support. These barriers can be difficult for students of color to navigate, and can lead to lower academic achievement, lower graduation rates and other negative outcomes. Hence, the white-black achievement gap, which reflects these disparities. Academic enrichment programs for students of color can help to close this gap by providing targeted support and resources to students of color. By providing students with the tools they need to succeed, these programs can help to level the playing field and ensure that all students have access to the education and opportunities they need to thrive.

Academic Enrichment Programs

Academic enrichment programs, some of which are known as college access programs, are widespread throughout the United States. Academic enrichment programs are supplementary educational programs that are designed to enhance students' academic experiences and challenge them academically. These programs give students the opportunity to delve deeper into topics that are typically taught in a school curriculum. Many academic enrichment programs offer college visits, career guidance, tutoring, academic counseling, and test preparation courses to their participants at no cost. The goal of academic enrichment programs is to get students to reach their full potential in academia and in life. To do this, students need to be highly involved in their education and eager to learn for themselves, which will help them to succeed academically and beyond.

SEO Scholars

SEO Scholars (Seizing Every Opportunity) is an academic enrichment program that successfully educates underserved public high school students to and through college. SEO Scholar's mission statement is to "propel human potential by identifying and admitting students who aim for a college degree, a fulfilling professional career, and a brighter future" (SEO Scholars, 2023). They do this by providing a rigorous academic foundation to academically prepare students throughout high school and college. Students enrolled in SEO Scholars match or exceed the national average SAT scores of all college-bound seniors because of the additional support they receive. Consequently, there is a 100% acceptance rate for four-year colleges, and 90% of SEO Scholars graduate from and earn a bachelor's degree (SEO Scholars, 2023). SEO Scholar's set their standards high for academics. Their goal is to create a more equitable society to ensure that no student is left behind.

SEO Scholars creates a more equitable society by closing the academic and opportunity gap for motivated young people. Chelsea Cohn, LMSW, who works as a College Persistence Advisor (CPA) at SEO Scholars, explains that there are many barriers for students, which makes their lives more challenging than they need to be. So, she knew that she wanted to work in education as a social worker at some capacity to make a difference in the lives of these students, (personal communication, 17 May 2023). She highlights the importance of providing her students with individualized support and academic advising to help close this present gap. She states:

Students are told they are behind from the beginning so then they fall behind, and if we keep telling students that they are behind then they get further behind. I let my students know that they are not behind, in fact, that they are ahead. Theoretically programs like SEO Scholars should not exist. All students should have the same

opportunities. No one should fall victim to this opportunity gap, but it happens, (personal communication, 17 May 2023).

Through her use of language, she empowers students and works with them through difficult situations to let them know that they are capable. It is important that students feel seen and heard. When advisors, mentors, or teachers validate students' feelings and experiences, it can boost their self-esteem and confidence. It can also help them develop into confident, independent thinkers. This can lead to better academic performance and a more positive attitude towards school.

The White-Black Achievement Gap

Karl Marx's Class Theory

Karl Marx was a German philosopher who investigated the relationship between the economy and the people working within the economic system. Marx based his theory on the struggles of the working class during the Industrial Revolution. With this, he explained how there are power relationships between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, and how that would cause class conflict. According to Marx, the proletariat are the workers from a low social class, while the bourgeoisie are the wealthy bosses, owners, and managers. The proletariat are the individuals who perform the labor, while the bourgeoisie obtain the profits from this labor. From this system, Marx argued that the workers are exploited while those in power get more powerful and wealthier. This economic power difference has an impact on the educational outcomes for students then and now.

In the 1800's, schools across the United States were racially segregated; therefore, Black and white students had to attend different schools. Fewer Black students were enrolled in school, and if they were, many left these schools at an early age. This is due to the poor conditions of the school and the fewer resources available to them compared to white schools. That was until in

1868, Congress passed the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guaranteed every citizen equal rights and protection under the law, including equal access to education. However, many southern leaders did not want Black people to have the same rights as white people. Consequently, Southern states adopted Jim Crow laws in the late 1870s to segregate Black and white people. Nearly all public places were separated by race. Due to these new laws, Black children could not attend the same schools as white children in the South. For this reason, white students have always academically performed better than black students in schools because education has always been accessible to them. Years later in 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that racial segregation of public schools was unconstitutional. Although progress has been made in improving racial and educational disparities, there are still vast inequalities.

New research developed by a team at the University of California at Berkeley shows that racial residential segregation is more widespread than ever before. More than 80 percent of major metropolitan areas in the United States were more segregated in 2019 than they were in 1990 (Menendian, 2021). This demonstrates how the United States continues to be a place of segregation rather than integration. According to data from the U.S Department of Education, about 33 percent of all white students attend a low-poverty school, and six percent attend a high-poverty school. Schools in lower-opportunity neighborhoods have fewer resources and lack the instructional materials needed for students to academically achieve their goals (Jordan, 2014). White kids are about five times more likely to attend a low-poverty school than a high-poverty school (Jordan, 2014). Marx's theory provides a framework for understanding how income and segregated schools drive white-black education gaps. Economic and social inequalities limit access to educational resources and opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This continues to lead to a cycle of poverty and segregation that is difficult to break.

Paige and Witty (2010) discuss the white-black achievement gap which describes differences in academic performance between students of color and White students. This is seen through standardized test scores, grade point averages, and graduation completion rates. According to Jalomo (2002) minority students are not performing at rates comparable to those of white students on achievement tests. Students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely than students from less privileged backgrounds to achieve a high score on the SAT. A score gap exists across socioeconomic levels and geographic comparisons, with students from lower economic backgrounds and students from rural areas generally scoring lower (Jalomo, 2002). Standardized testing discriminates against minority students. The SAT, for example, is used as a qualifier to determine what students get scholarships, or more financial aid. A U.S Department of Education study found that one-third of students who scored 1110 or higher on the SAT were from high-income brackets whereas only 10 percent came from a low-income family (Jalomo, 2002). Students from high socioeconomic backgrounds were twice as likely as their middle-class counterparts to score at that level and four times as likely to score that high as students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This demonstrates how students who grow up with a lower socioeconomic status struggle the most academically, which puts them at a disadvantage in comparison to their peers. As a result, in college, their performance on exams and persistence in college is much lower.

King (2009) explains how college access programs aim to address educational inequities. College access programs consider participants from underrepresented racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, while also looking at participants who are economically disadvantaged, low economic status, and low income. Family wealth and income is one of the best predictors of college enrollment, according to King (2009). However, many students who are part of these programs do not come from middle- and higher-class families to help them out. This is the

reason why college enrollment between students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and for students diagnosed as learning disabled are wider than ever, while for white students it is not. These programs act as an access opportunity to learn before college and enhance one's knowledge.

The inequalities that continue to persist today stem from Jim Crow laws. In the United States, many areas are still highly segregated, which is related to the disparity in education for white and Black children. To further explain this phenomenon, many people of color reside in lower-opportunity neighborhoods, while white people reside in higher-opportunity neighborhoods. Lower-opportunity neighborhoods are affordable for Black, Latinx, and low-income households, but are concentrated with poverty. On the other hand, higher-opportunity neighborhoods provide access to certain amenities and community attributes. It is common for many white people to live in higher-opportunity neighborhoods. Because higher-opportunity neighborhoods have access to community attributes, this increases their access to economic mobility for their residents, as well as institutions, including schools. In higher-opportunity neighborhoods, there is a lot of money being allocated towards schools, which sets students up for the opportunity to succeed. However, in poverty-stricken areas, it is the opposite, where schools are not receiving enough funding. Schools with less funding are associated with lower student achievement because they do not have enough resources for students. Ultimately, this contributes to the white-black achievement gap, which explains why it is still relatively large. According to recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, white students are outperforming black students in reading and math at all grade levels. This disparity continues to be a critical challenge.

Parental Involvement

Trusty (1998) explores how parental involvement and parenting practices are related to many positive outcomes in adolescents such as self-esteem, higher career aspirations, positive school attitudes, academic success, adaptive school behavior, and more. There is home-based involvement and school-based involvement. Home-based involvement includes parents helping their child with schoolwork, course selection, and career plans, while school-based involvement refers to the frequency in which parents participate in school events and communicate with school (Trusty, 1998). Home-based involvement is more highly related to positive education outcomes than school-based involvement. This is associated with educational achievement and with other outcomes. Steinberg et al., (1992) reported that adolescents with higher academic achievement were likely to have parents who were concurrently demanding (strict and in control) and responsive (supporting and involved). Across various segments of our society, adolescents' educational expectations have steadily become higher over the last 2 decades.

Tinto's theory of departure

Tinto's theory of departure (1993) suggested that students must separate themselves from their former communities, including families, to fully integrate into their new community—the college environment—to be successful in higher education (Palmer et al., 2011). Tinto's theory describes three stages: separatism, transition, and incorporation. The first stage of Tinto's theory is separation stage. During this stage, students adopt the norms and behaviors of the college culture and reject the norms of their past communities (Palmer et al., 2011). This allows the student to separate themselves from their previous communities and integrate themselves into their college community instead. Transition is the next stage of Tinto's theory. He characterized this stage as a “passage between associations with the communities of the present” (Palmer et al., 2011, p. 580). He explains that this stage is stressful. Students limit the amount of time they spend on campus, which also limits the interaction they have with members of the college

community and the knowledge about college norms on campus. The last stage of Tinto's theory is the incorporation stage, where students look to become socially and academically integrated within the university by connecting with faculty and students (Palmer et al., 2011). Being a part of clubs, organizations, fraternities, sororities, and extracurriculars are examples of that. Many scholars have criticized Tinto's theory. In fact, scholars have found that encouragement from families, specifically, parents has been beneficial to students and allowed them to be successful in their higher education.

Parental involvement can include being involved in students' extracurriculars, helping with homework, or attending parent-teacher conferences. Encouragement from family has an important influence on Black male students' intentions to persist in college. A qualitative study investigating factors of success for 37 Black males that Ross (1998) conducted at a private HBCU revealed that the participants' relationship with parents, particularly their mothers, was important to their academic success (Robert et al., 2011). For example, one of the students, James, mentioned that their mother's use of role modeling the importance of an education by continuing her education led to an increased desire to succeed. Eventually he pursued not only his undergraduate degree, but his doctoral degree as well. Aside from James, Omar, who has a learning disability, explained that his mother encouraged his persistence by reminding him to be appreciative of his uniqueness and experiences. She reminded him that there would be obstacles to success, but working hard would help him to overcome it, and he did. Samuel noted that both of his parents were integral to his academic success. For example, his parents helped him to realize the importance of a college education and motivated him often, providing a strong support system. Tinto's theory suggests that students should separate themselves from their past communities, which includes families, but the encouragement they received from their family has allowed James, Omar, and Samuel to feel capable of academically excelling in their school

and home environments. Families played a critical role in Black students' success by providing emotional, academic, and financial support, further justifying the importance of minority students not separating themselves from their families while in college. The finding of the study confirms the crucial role that Black families have on the success of Black students in higher education.

Black females have been relatively successful compared to Black males in navigating a pathway to higher education enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment (Winkle-Wagner, 2015). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2020), college enrollment rates among young adults since 2000 were higher for females than males. Among Black young adults, in 2000 the enrollment rate for females (35 percent) was 10 percentage points higher than the rate for males (25 percent). According to Banks (2009), Black women could reconceptualize how they viewed their success and their place within higher education to navigate college. Their resilience explains why they have higher educational enrollment rates and degree attainment. Moreover, Banks (2009) maintained that Black women brought with them 'cultural capital,' (skills and knowledge), that has led them to learn how to navigate through college and be successful. The quality of the relationship with parents can also influence African American students' ability to cope with the educational challenges of college. For instance, in a quantitative study including both African American men and women, Love (2008) asserted that parental attachments, that are considered warm and caring, can alleviate psychological distress for African American college students. In order to cope with the educational challenges of college, having formal institutional support can provide support institutional support for Black women.

Furthermore, Montgomery (2000), explains that most Indian people pursuing higher education relied on distancing themselves and self-talk to encourage themselves to academically persist. Self-talk is one's conversation of encouragement with themselves about life experiences.

Having self-talk, one believes in oneself and does not need wisdom from anyone else because of one's faith in the future. According to Montgomery (2000), self-talk served as an inner voice to strengthen one's personal goals and expectations. Although they acknowledged that support from their families was essential, whether there was no support or not, being able to encourage themselves is what pushed them and allowed them to be academically successful.

Empowered Youth Program

Many low-income parents of African American students are hesitant to become involved in their child's life because they are too busy, feel intimidated by schools, or do not understand the importance of being involved in their child's education (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2010). Fortunately, academic enrichment programs, like Empowered Youth Program (EYP), help African American parents to overcome these feelings they experience and get involved. EYP represents an enrichment program (academic and social) that uses a developmental and comprehensive approach that works with African American students and their parents (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2010). They do this by providing special information sessions dedicated to helping African American parents understand their role in their children's postsecondary future. EYP staff also evaluate students' current level of academic and social performance in collaboration with parents to assess where they should be academically and socially based on their age, home and school situations, academic and social performance, and personal goals (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2010). From there, EYP staff develop an action plan that provides students with opportunities to develop the necessary skills needed to reach their academic and social potential. Because of the many opportunities there are for parents to be involved in their child's education, students have better turnout rates in terms of higher GPA's and graduation rates. For example, after 6 months of consistent participation in EYP, 88% of students' GPA's increased (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2010). Also, 98% of EYP program participants have graduated from high school and have been accepted into, currently attend, or have graduated

from postsecondary institutions (Bailey & Bradbury-Bailey, 2010). EYP is able to work with both participants and their families because of its holistic approach.

EYP incorporates their developmental and comprehensive approach throughout their three components: Saturday Academy, academic advisement, and exam lock-ins. These components work together to increase the chances of graduation from high school and postsecondary enrollment for students. In Saturday academy, students master advanced-level courses, including reading, vocabulary, and math. According to Bailey and Bradbury-Bailey (2010), all students are required to attend at least 85-90% of the academy sessions. Having this extra day of school out of the week helps students close the achievement gap in the core academic classes. It puts them further ahead rather than behind in their courses. Also, parents being there to motivate their child to attend Saturday academy increases students' overall motivation to succeed. On another note, in EYP, students are assigned an advisor as part of the academic advisement program to ensure that they are on the right track for enrollment in a postsecondary institution. Advisors use an academic advisement plan as a guide to monitor the students' academic and social progress. At the end of the year, EYP parents are invited to student-led conferences in which students are able to review their advisement plan with their parents and EYP academic advisor. The more support that students have the better the educational outcomes. Furthermore, exam lock-ins prepare students for final semester exams. This is an intensive overnight experience where there is exam studying, and time for individual study. In EYP, fostering these study habits has led to increased scores on state standardized tests and final exams, ultimately narrowing the present white-black achievement gap.

Similar to how African American parents are hesitant to become involved in their child's academic lives, in American Indian households, parents experience these same feelings.

American Indian families "may carry long-held distrust of schools related to a traumatic history

of forced boarding school experiences” (Bardhoshi et al.,2012, p. 5). American Indian parents experience distrust in school systems because they have been shut out before in the past and are afraid of repeated experiences. According to National Center for Education Statistics, American Indian students graduate high school at a much lower rate (65%) compared to their White counterparts (84%), resulting in a sizable gap in educational attainment. American Indian students represent less than 1% of all enrolled students at the postsecondary level and college rates for American Indian students are declining (Bardhoshi et al., 2012). American Indian students lack academic preparation and skills prior to college and feel an overwhelming sense of isolation while enrolled. Minority and low-income students, including American Indians, show significant gains in college going rates when their parents understand and support their efforts (Bardhoshi et al.,2012). It is important to involve parents to help them overcome existing barriers and support their children.

Validation theory

Validation results in academic and personal growth for students. Students develop confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of self-worth when validated. This can lead to a willingness to take academic risks such as participating in class and asking questions. Moreover, validation can help students develop social-emotional skills such as empathy, compassion, and self-awareness. They are able to develop a greater understanding of learning their own emotions and the emotions of others. This can lead to more positive social interactions and stronger relationships with others. Validation theory has been used to study students involved in comprehensive college transition programs. When students feel validation in programs or through campus resources, it improves their academic performance and a sense of connection to the institution (Huerta, 2022). The elements of validation theory (1994) are as follows: (1) Institutional agents are responsible for initiating contact with students of color. (2) Institutional

agents must support students of color to ensure that they “feel capable of learning” and instill in students a sense of self-worth and reassurance that they matter to the institutional fabric of the university (p.48). (3) Validation must be done consistently, not only on a singular occasion or for an irregular duration during the academic year. (4) Validation can happen in and outside the classroom and can include enrichment and transition programs. (5) Validation matters for students throughout the college experience. (6) Validation is especially impactful on students in the “first few weeks of class” and during their “first year of college” (Rendon, 2002, p.645).

Validation theory considers how students of color tend to have lower graduation rates compared to their white counterparts. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2019), for the last four decades, college enrollment and completion rates for men of color have decreased gradually. As a result, men of color programs in higher education have been developed to provide sources of support and information to narrow the college graduation gaps for Black, Latino, Native American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander undergraduate students, (Huerta, 2022). Huerta (2022) highlights that men struggle asking for help during emotional or academic challenges. This is due to the social stigma that men must be manly enough to determine how to navigate difficult situations on their own. This creates pressure for men to conform to rigid gender roles. Nonetheless, these programs exist to benefit men of color, providing the space for them to feel emotionally supported and teaching them how to challenge traditional forms of masculinity.

Researchers have found that when Black and Latino men feel connected to their institutions, they are more likely to engage in academic support services (Huerta, 2022). This means that they take advantage of tutoring and academic advising on campus to benefit their academic success. When Black students are involved in men of color programs, they are more likely to build relationships with faculty and staff (Huerta, 2022). One of the elements of

validation theory highlights that institutional agents must support students of color to ensure that they feel capable of learning and instill a sense of self-worth. These men of color enrichment programs instill a sense of self-worth through activities and curriculums. These programs allow men of color to grow socially. The men learning how to be vulnerable and build healthy relationships with others ultimately promotes positive and healthy student development and relationships.

Furthermore, first generation students often come from lower socioeconomic and minority backgrounds, and experience stressors very differently than their continuing- generation peers (Becker, et al., 2017). The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) show that 46% of undergraduate college students are the first in their family to attend college. Since their parents or guardians did not obtain college degrees, these students are less prepared for college. As a result, they enter postsecondary education with higher levels of stress. They also enter college with different needs and expectations than their peers who are not first-generation students. To support first-generation students, GenOne, a well-established first-generation student academic enrichment program was created. This program works to promote academic success and increase the retention of first-generation students through an initial summer bridge program and then ongoing academic and social support (Becker, et al., 2017). Approximately 1,500 students, the vast majority who are African American and Latino/a, are served by GenOne. Their Summer Bridge Program, an intensive 2-month program, provides incoming students with orientation to the program, university, and community. The purpose of the program is to prepare students for the academic rigor of college.

Validation matters for students in GenOne. At GenOne, students meet individually with a coach to discuss both their personal and academic lives. They develop plans to achieve their goals with their coach, including both academic and personal. Eventually, students develop a

strong relationship with their coach, and this connection plays a central role for many students. The connections make everything in their lives easier for students because they know who to turn to when they encounter difficulties during college. Students indicated that their membership in the GenOne program has served to support their mental well-being. For example, GenOne allowed students to “(a) feel cared for, (b) develop a sense of belonging within both GenOne and the broader university community, (c) prevent stressful situations from becoming overwhelming, (d) remediate distress that materialized, and (e) become resilient when faced with obstacles” (Becker, et al., 2017, p. 1171). Students get the opportunity to feel supported, learn new things, get involved, and make friends. It is important to have the support system and resources to help achieve goals.

Human Rights Framework

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects the rights of every individual everywhere. Article 1 states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, while Article 2, states that everyone is entitled to all these rights and freedoms despite their race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (United Nations, 1948). Together, these articles affirm the worth of every individual and protect every individual under the law. Equally important, Article 28 of The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to an education, and Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has a right to an education that is equally accessible amongst all groups of people. Education is a fundamental human right that is essential for promoting equality. This means that schools must provide equal and accessible education to every child. Schools can help children grow and reach their full potential. Although this is the expectation, it is not the reality. When access to education is unequal or limited, it can exacerbate existing social and economic disparities,

denying individuals their human right to equal opportunity. Many minority students are robbed of their human rights. Academic enrichment programs are in place to keep this from happening, and to provide everyone with an education that is equally as good. They help address the systemic and structural inequalities that limit access to educational resources and opportunities for low-income families or marginalized communities, and work to close the white-Black achievement gap.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is a U.S. federal law that aimed at improving public primary and secondary schools. This act reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Act, which committed to equal opportunity for all students, and to bridge the gap between poor and high-performing students and districts. To do this, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires all public schools to administer a nationwide standardized test annually to students in select grades. Also, to have teacher professional development, educational technology, and parental involvement activities, among others to help a student reach their academic goals. This act was flawed in its implementation as it relied too heavily on standardized testing to measure student achievement. Additionally, the law failed to provide adequate resources and support low-income students, which left students behind. The consequences of this act undermined its effectiveness in closing the white-black achievement gap and worsened existing disparities.

Human Service Implications

Micro Level

In academic enrichment programs, social workers can inform teachers on the circle of courage to make part of the curriculum. The circle of courage can promote positive youth development and socio-emotional learning. Human service professionals assist people who need support, guidance, and resources. Social workers are considered human service professionals as they provide a range of services to help service participants in times of need. For example, social

workers can help by providing counseling, connecting people with community resources, and advocating for their needs. Social workers in academic enrichment programs can benefit students by providing them with additional support and resources to succeed academically and personally. They can help students stay engaged in school and achieve their goals, but also help students with a variety of issues such as mental health concerns and family problems. The circle of courage is a model that encompasses four values: Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. Bendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (2019) define belonging as maintaining relationships with caring and supporting individuals. By emphasizing the value of belonging, students can be encouraged to develop positive relationships with peers and adults. Ultimately, this will allow them to develop strong relationships and value the importance of community. Mastery is defined as strengthening knowledge, skills, or talents (Bendtro et al., 2019). Students can learn to set goals for themselves and work towards achieving them. In the spirit of independence, Bendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (2019) highlight the value of individual autonomy and decision making. Being able to take responsibility for one's own learning and behavior helps one to grow as a person. Lastly, generosity is about giving and sharing (Bendtro et al., 2019). In these academic enrichment programs, students can be encouraged to contribute to the well-being of others and the community. By incorporating these values into the classroom, it can help students feel valued and respected, which can lead to improved academic performance, increased engagement in school, and better mental health outcomes. Students can develop a sense of purpose and self-worth. As for teachers, they can create a learning environment that is positive and inclusive.

Mezzo Level

Human service professionals can connect academic enrichment programs with other community organizations and resources. They can help build partnerships with other organizations that can provide services and resources to students and families. In other words,

they can connect academic enrichment programs with local mental health clinics, social service agencies, and community centers to provide students and their families with a range of support services. Sepanik & Brown (2021) define school-community partnerships as collaborative partnerships between schools and outside organizations and agencies that can help school districts meet the needs of all students, especially those most marginalized by political and social systems in place. Partner organizations and agencies can provide academic enrichment activities during and outside of normal school hours, tutoring and behavior support for students, and additional opportunities to engage families and community members (Sepanik & Brown, 2021). By collaborating with community organizations, human service professionals can help create a strong network of support that promotes student success and well-being.

Conclusion

Academic enrichment programs are an effective tool for helping to close the white-black achievement gap. Despite the gap still being large, academic enrichment programs slightly narrow it. Black women and men, American Indians, low-income, and first-generation college students benefit most from academic enrichment programs. This is particularly true when parents are involved in their education and supporting them every step of the way. Academic enrichment programs played a crucial role in the lives of these students and supported them in many ways. These programs offered students a wide range of resources and helped them overcome both personal and academic challenges. Many of these students received tutoring, mentorship, college readiness workshops, and other academic resources to succeed and grow into professionals. Academic enrichment programs also provide social and emotional support, to help students navigate challenges they may be facing, whether it is academic, financial, or personal. When students of color are given the tools, resources, and support, they succeed in every way.

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