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An Interpretative Phenomenological Study Exploring the Experiences of African American Males in Same Race/Gender Mentoring Relationships While Attending a Predominately White Institution in the South

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AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY EXPLORING THE
EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN SAME RACE/GENDER
MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS WHILE ATTENDING A PREDOMINATELY
WHITE INSTITUTION IN THE SOUTH

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
Jonathan C. Pettigrew
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Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study was undertaken to assess the experiences of undergraduate (and recent graduate) African American male students who were currently involved in a mentoring relationship with another African American male, while attending a Predominantly White Institution in the South. The researcher used purposive sampling to select undergraduate participants who had formed mentoring relationships with other African American males. Face-to-face interviews were conducted and the interview transcripts were analyzed for structural elements or master themes, using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a guide. The findings suggest that these relationships played a role in helping undergraduate African American males navigate college life successfully while attending a Predominately White Institution in the South.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family: my grandmother, Louise Smith (deceased), my mom, Ruby Pettigrew, my dad: O'Neal Pettigrew, my siblings: Charles and Nathan (deceased), Maurice, Arleshia, John-John, and LaTosha Nicole Taylor (deceased), and my munchkins: Anika, Lee-Lee, and Jada. Although we have been subjected to many tragedies over the past several years, we have managed to remain a strong family unit. I also want to dedicate this dissertation to all the African American males who are currently persisting towards obtaining a degree in higher education.

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I want to thank the ten African American males that participated in my study. You guys are an awesome group of intelligent young men. I am grateful we were able to create a platform that allowed each of your stories to be told. I wish each of you the best in all of your future endeavors, and I know I now have ten new brothers for life.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The following study focused on exploring the experiences of African American males who have formed or continue to engage in mentoring relationships as undergraduate junior/seniors or as recent graduates between 2012 and 2015. The mentor in each relationship was An African American male and the relationships took place at a PWI in the South. The researcher set out to explore if these relationships could have a profound impact on a student's ability to persist towards graduating from college. Through this study, the researcher captured the experiences of African American males, through their stories, who are participating in mentoring relationships with other African American men.

The information provided in this chapter was organized into ten sections: (a) background of the study, (b) statement of the problem, (c) purpose of study, (d) researcher's perspective, (e) theoretical framework, (f) research questions, (g) definition of terms, (h) delimitations and assumptions, (i) limitations of the study, and (j) chapter summary.

Background of the Study

The Schott Foundations Report (2008) on public education spelled out the educational inequities in graduation rates and achievement gaps impacting African American males in the United States, particularly in the South. The Schott Foundation on Public Education mission is to develop and strengthen a broad-based and representative movement to achieve fully resourced, quality pre K-12 public education (The Schott

Foundation Report, 2010). The Schott Foundation has been proactive over the years by evaluating the success of national, state and local public systems in educating African American males (The Schott Foundation Report, 2010). One of the ultimate goals of the Schott Foundation is to raise awareness about the African American male achievement gap and challenge school districts to implement policies that foster academic success for African American males (The Schott Foundation Report, 2010).

Beyond K-12 public education, the statistics surrounding an African American males' ability to persist towards obtaining a degrees in higher education are just as alarming (Bush & Bush, 2010; McCarter, 2009; Morris & Monroe, 2009; Harper, 2004). This significant amount of negative literature on the African American male has underscored the challenges and obstacles faced by African American men who are in pursuit of a higher education. Furthermore, the successes of these African American males are overshadowed by the large volume of negative literature that exists (Batey, 1999). However, several studies have shown that the number of African American males obtaining degrees in higher education continues to rise (Harper, 2012; Palmer & Palmer, 2008-2009; Strayhorn, 2008; Scales, et al., 2005).

More recent research also illustrated that exploring what African American males are doing wrong is counterproductive to increasing retention and persistence towards graduation for African American males (Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez, & Trevino, 1997). Instead the focus should center on what these students are doing right. Hall (1999), Hall and Allen (1989), Freeman (1997) and Graham (1994) all advocated for more positive images of the African American male. Furthermore, the authors suggested that research

studies should focus more on the barriers this population has overcome in the pursuit of obtaining a degree from a college or university. Through his research, Wilson (1999) uncovered that very little is known about the impact that mentoring relationships can have on an African American male's ability to persist in higher education.

Statement of the Problem

There is no shortage of literature on the plight of the African American male in pursuit of an education. Prior research has examined the African American male in the K-12 public education system. Statistics exist concerning the high dropout rates of men from all regions of the United States. Furthermore, there is an overwhelming amount of literature that focuses on the experience of African American men in higher education; encompassing topics like retention, persistence, support, and even mentoring. However, very little research exists that explored the experiences of African American men in mentoring relationships with another African American male. Most importantly, not one single study exist that has explored the experiences of African American men in same race/gender mentoring relationships that currently attend (or recently attended) a PWI in the South, especially an institution located in South Carolina. Palmer & Young (2008-2009) explored the role that supportive relationships play in the retention of African American males. However the Palmer and Young study took place at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), and no data were presented to indicate that these relationships were of the same race/gender.

Harper, et al. (2004) conducted a study that explored the role that supportive relationships play on the academic success of African American males similar to the

research conducted by Palmer and Young. Like Palmer and Young (2008-2009, Harper's et al. (2004) study was also conducted at a HBCU, but his population also consisted of African American women. Furthermore, Harper's study extended across 12 HBCUs, 9 public and 3 private. Harper went on to reiterate the need for further exploration of these relationships through future research. Unlike the Palmer and Young (2008-2009) and Harper, et al. (2004), this research study will examine the experiences of males of the same race and genders who are currently involved in a mentoring relationship at a large institution in the South. The results of this study will add to the existing literature on mentoring by providing a platform for African American males, who are persisting, to have an opportunity to tell their stories about their involvement in same race/gender mentoring relationships. More specifically, this study attempts to address this gap in the literature and add to the body of knowledge by examining the degree and nature of the influence that mentorship has on the academic success of African American male juniors, seniors in higher education, and recent graduates.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of African American males who are presently in a mentoring relationship with another African American male. Through this exploration, this study afforded these students an opportunity to tell their stories about the dynamics of these relationships, and how these mentoring relationships have been instrumental in their ability to persist at a large PWI in the South.

Researcher's Perspective

As a mentor, I believe that establishing a strong mentoring relationship with African American males at a young age can greatly improve their chance of academic success. Furthermore, I believe that mentoring is a strong early intervention mechanism to prevent African American males from dropping out of high school and deterring them from pursuing degrees in higher education

After being involved in several successful mentoring relationships, both past and present, I know first-hand the impact that such a relationship can have on the academic success of a young African American male. From all existing literature, it is very clear that there are major benefits to mentoring African American males in general. Mentoring can have a major impact on the lives of African American men. However, there is a lack of research to support the specific benefits of a mentor/mentee relationship between two African American males.

Furthermore, there is a lack of literature that focuses on the plight of African American men geographically, particularly in the South (Morrison & Monroe, 2009). This study also explored the role the culture of the South plays in the academic success of the African American male. Poverty, oppression, and racism have a long history of existence in the South and have a profound impact on the life of African Americans, especially African American men. Based on the results of this study, poverty, oppression, and racism had some impact on the participants of this study as well.

As an African American male, I felt obligated to make a contribution to existing literature on the plight of African American men when it comes to retention and

persistence. One way to accomplish this goal was to explore this phenomenon through the lived experiences of Black men. Furthermore, the mentor needs to have a voice as well, which I plan to explore in future research. Hopefully through my dialogues with these individuals, I can present research findings that encourage university administrators and faculty to see the value in mentoring as an intervention method that increases the number of African American men who persist towards graduation.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework or theoretical lens that influenced me to undertake this study came from the author Strayhorn et al. (2008). Strayhorn and others undertook the task of looking at African American student relationships with faculty of color and the benefits of these relationships. Through the author's exploration, the theoretical framework of "Othermothering" emerged (Strayhorn et al., 2008). According to Strayhorn et al. (2008), Othermothering is a pattern of care that dates back to slavery, where mothers had to entrust the care of their children to other individuals. This same compassion for others has become the role of some faculty and administrators in institutions today. According to the authors, African American students are viewed as family, and the relationships forged go beyond just caring; a moral and ethical obligation to advocate for African American students (Strayhorn et al., 2008). Through his viewpoint, African Americans are motivated to develop relationships to help move college students through their experiences successfully. Moreover, there is a moral need to give back to the community by pushing African American students to perform at their

best potential. Strayhorn et al. (2008) went on to identify three important components on Othermothering: ethnic care, cultural advancement, and institutional guardianship.

According to the authors, ethnic care involves viewing students as family; moving beyond just caring by creating a nurturing environment with strong support for students. Cultural advancement meant creating intentional relationships to help students persist which come from the moral need to give back to the community. Institutional guardianship meant the recognition of the role institutions play in producing African American graduates that represent the African American community. This is accomplished by providing the support need to be successful. Also, this can be further illustrated by making conscious attempts at maintaining African American enrollment and encouraging alumni to give back to a particular institution (Strayhorn et al., 2008).

From the onset, the concept of Othermothering resonated with me as an African male. I remember initially reading the Strayhorn study while working on a research project during my master's program. I immediately thought back to my undergraduate days as a student attending Tuskegee University. From there, memories came back about the relationships I established with members of faculty and staff on campus. Although I did not phantom the level of vested interest others had in my success at the time, I realize now the level of support and concern came from a place similar to most of the participants in the Strayhorn study. Several of my professors became more than just mentors or members of the administration; they became a part of my extended family.

Moreover, I have found myself doing the same thing to other African American students; giving back because I feel morally obligated and because I genuinely care about

the academic success of other African American Students. As a result, exploring the concept of Othermothering was one of many motivating factors that encouraged me to undertake this study here at South University. Unlike Tuskegee University, which is a HBCU, I was motivated to know if this same level of care and concern for student could exist at a PWI in the South.

Research Questions

In order to fully explore the dynamics of same race/gender mentoring relationships, the following research questions were used to frame this study:

1. What are the experiences of junior and senior undergraduate (or recent graduate) African American male students at South University who have formed mentoring relationships with another African American male?
2. How has the mentoring relationship helped these students navigate their experience(s) on campus?
3. To what extent does same race/gender mentoring promote persistence among African American males who are successful in college?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined below:

- *Academic Success* – to maintain at least a 2.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale, and having achieved the required credits to be considered a junior, senior, or have graduated from a 4-year institution.
- *African-American and Black* - (used interchangeably) refer to a person living in the United States of America and having African ancestry. For the purpose of this study,

“Black” will be used as a term that will be used to instill racial pride, group consciousness, and a hope for racial justice (Smith, 1992). The term “African American” will be used because it has become more politically acceptable to young adults (Smith, 1992).

- *Gender vs. Sex* – The research acknowledges that the use of the word “gender” and/or “sex” may bring some degree of confusion as sexual perception and gender roles are ever changing. However, gender is used in this study as the preferred label to identify the African American participants and mentors who participated in this research study. According to West and Zimmerman (1987), gender is used a way to categorize or label individuals as male or female. These categories are usually based on preconceived notions or norms learned through socialization.
- *Interpretative Phenomenology* - The interpretative phenomenological approach allows the researcher an opportunity concentrate on the phenomenon under review through the discovery and interpretation of concealed meaning embedded in the words of participant narrative (Rapport, 2000).
- *Mentor* - an individual who has a vested interest in helping another individual navigate through challenges and obstacles encountered in life (Daloz, 1986).
- *Mentoring (formal)* – “A formalized process whereby a more knowledgeable and experienced person actuates a supportive role of overseeing and encouraging reflection and learning within a less experienced and knowledgeable person, so as to facilitated that person’s career and personal development” (Roberts, 2000, p. 162).

- *Mentoring (Informal)* – “...precipitates from a developed relationship between the mentor and mentee that is built from mutual interests and attraction (Daloz, 1986).
- *Predominately White Institution (PWI)* – A four years institution where the majority of the students enrolled are White.
- *Race/Ethnicity* – Used in this study to identify African American or Black research participants. According to Greene & Owen (2004), a researcher should refrain from identifying research participants by their race or ethnicity; instead the participants’ should be afforded an opportunity to self-identify. For the purpose of this study, each participant either referred to themselves as “Black” or “African American” during the data collection phase. As such, the researcher will use the same labels to identify the participants, in addition to their assigned pseudonym.
- *Self-efficacy* – “one’s confidence to succeed at the academic tasks rather than one’s actual ability” (Spitzer, 2000, p. 84).
- *Social support* – “the degree to which a person’s basic social needs are gratified through interaction with other” (Davis, 1991, p. 146).
- *South* – For the purpose of this study, the region of the United States that consist of the following states: Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, and Louisiana.
- *South University* – For the purpose of this study, a pseudonym used to identify the research site where the study took place. The name makes no reference to an existing university.

Delimitations & Assumptions

Simon (2011) indicated that delimitations are those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of a study. Therefore, the delimitations in this study were used by the researcher in order to explore the experiences of only African American male students. In order to accomplish this goal, the researcher only recruited juniors, seniors, and recent graduates at South University who were involved in a same gender/race mentoring relationship. Due to the scarcity of literature that explores this type of relationship, the researcher acknowledges that limiting other research participants denies the opportunity for others to contribute to the study. A second delimitation was the researcher's decision to limit the study to one institution within one state.

Since anonymity and confidentiality will be preserved and the participants are volunteers who may withdraw from the study at any time, the researcher assumes that the participants openly shared their experiences and answered all interview questions honestly.

Limitations of the Study

The following are limitations to this study:

1. The results of this study are specific to the 10 African American males who participated in this research. The information may not be generalized to all African American males involved in mentoring relationships while attending college.
2. The results are specific one large public institution in the South.

Chapter Summary

Chapter one provided an overview of this study. The researcher provided information on the background of the study. Afterwards, the statement of the problem was presented, along with the purpose of the study. Here, the researcher touched on the gaps in literature that justified undertaking this study. This was followed by the researcher's perspective on the study. In this section, the researcher explained his personal motivations for conducting this study. The theoretical framework was discussed. Additionally, the research questions were presented along with definition of terms. Finally delimitations, assumptions, and limitations were provided to give the researcher an opportunity to be transparent about the study.

Chapter two will review the literature on mentoring and also the status of African American males in education. Furthermore, several approaches to mentoring will be examined, and the researcher will provide additional information on the rationale for undertaking this study. Chapter three will present details regarding the methodology used in this study and will discuss the process undertaken by the researcher to collect and analyze data. Chapter four will present the findings from all data collected from the research participants. Finally, chapter five will address the study's research questions and discuss the findings as they relate to the literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

After reviewing the literature, the following sections will be discussed in this literature review: (a) the status of African American males in education; (b) academic achievement of Black men in the South; (c) identity development theories; (d) mentoring overview and the effects of a mentoring relationship with the Black male; (e) Black males initiatives in higher education; and (f) the role of race/gender in mentoring relationships.

The Status of African American Males in Education

Upon reviewing the literature on African American male's performance in school, statistics overwhelmingly supports the fact that there is a lower graduation success rate for Black males who reside in urban or inner-city neighborhoods (Morris & Monroe, 2009). These neighborhoods tend to be crime infested poverty stricken areas. Black males growing up in the inner city face obstacles unparalleled to their suburban counterparts (Morris & Monroe, 2009). The plight of Black males can be further illustrated by the juvenile prison population in the United States. McCarter (2009) undertook a study that explored the role that race plays in overrepresentation of minority males in Virginia's juvenile population. In the McCarter study, the author interviewed judges, attorneys, and families in an attempt to explain this disparity. McCarter's findings discovered that African American males are twice as likely to be incarcerated in comparison to Caucasian males (McCarter, 2009). McCarter goes on to point out that a majority of the African American males incarcerated in the United States fail to obtain a high school

diploma; most of the Black males in the juvenile system have less than a ninth-grade education (McCarter, 2009).

According to a study by the H. J. Kaiser Family Foundation (2006), fewer than 8% of African American men between the ages of 15-29 graduated from college. According to the same study, African American males are less likely to graduate from high school compared to Caucasians and Asians. Bush and Bush (2010) explored African American male achievement in community colleges. In this study, the authors focused on Black males' ability to persist at two-year colleges in the state of California. The study focused on participants' perceptions regarding the level of support they received at their college. According to the authors, African American male achievement in California community colleges was consistent with the trends of underachievement of this population at other academic institutions (Bush & Bush, 2010). African American males in comparison to other ethnic and gender groups exhibited disproportionately lower performances on academic outcome measures (Bush & Bush, 2010). The authors also highlighted the fact that 81% of all African American males that attend college in California are enrolled in community colleges (Bush & Bush, 2010). For the purpose of this study, the South was an area of focus. Therefore, the next section will focus on the academic achievement of Black men in the South.

Academic Achievement of Black Men in the South

Existing literature overwhelmingly supports the fact that there is a major achievement gap between White and Black males in the South (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Morris & Monroe, 2009; Ogbu, 2003). Ladson-Billings (2005) acknowledged the

achievement gap in the United States educational system, but indicated that the gap needs to be examined further with regard to the educational debt. According to the author, constant focus on paying down our debt might ultimately take away from funds that would have been appropriated to communities serving the poor and students of color (Landson-Billings, 2006). Milner 2012), on the other hand indicates that too much emphasis has been placed on the academic achievement gap when it comes to minority students. Instead, researchers should focus more on opportunity, which would allow a close examination of the disparities that exist between students and schools (Miler, 2012).

Another area worth investigating, according to Morris and Monroe (2009), is the role geographic location plays regarding student achievement. According to the authors, "...researchers have not fully investigated how regional place, particularly the U.S. South, molds Black life in general...and the schooling experiences..." (p. 28). In Georgia, there is an 18 percent gap between the number of White and Black males who actually graduate from high school. Statistics are similar in Florida and South Carolina (The Scott Report, 2008). The South has had many stigmas, including the image of severe racial divide, where Blacks and Whites live worlds apart; Blacks typically at the bottom and White people at the top of the hierarchy (Morris & Monroe, 2009).

According to the Schott Foundation Report (2010), not a single Southern state ranked in the top 10 under the category of the "Ten Best Performing States for Black Males". Furthermore, only a few Southern school districts were identified as districts that have low drop-out rates in comparison to White male students. Additionally, Georgia,

Florida, South Carolina, and Alabama were included on the list of the worst performing states for Black males. To further illustrate this deficit, Georgia and South Carolina both have a 19% gap between the graduation rates of Black versus White males.

Morris and Monroe (2009) explained that against this backdrop of suppression, Blacks have been at a disadvantage for advancement in society for many years. Because the South is regarded as the poorest region in the United States, its social and economic opportunities as it pertains to African Americans are unique. For instance, the majority of public school children are from low income families (Morris & Monroe, 2009). Since the African American population is largely centered in the South, low-income individuals are mostly Black. Therefore, Black students are most affected by conditions of poverty (Morris & Monroe, 2009). Furthermore, the authors believe that one must understand society, but in order to do so, one has to understand their conditions and more importantly, their place under those conditions.

Morris and Monroe (2009) concluded their research by stating that social dynamics such as geographical location, economic sustenance, and opportunities will affect the academic achievements of any one person. They state that most African Americans live in the South, under unstable economic circumstances placed upon them by years of oppression. A lack of opportunity and encouragement affects scholarly performance and henceforth creates a sizeable gap between the academic achievements of between Black and White scholars (Morris & Monroe, 2009).

On a national scale, beyond the South, Black male academic achievement raises additional cause for concern. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics

(2013), only 66.1% of Black students graduated from high school compared to 83.0% of White males. This study also reports that 21% of Black men beyond the age of twenty, who did not go to college, are in jail. Furthermore, about one in four Black men aged 20-29 are on probation, parole, or in prison, which is more than the total number of Black men in college (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013).

If a Black male is able to overcome the odds and be successful on a college campus, that does not necessarily mean he is able to successfully persist towards graduation. According to Howard-Hamilton (1997), the Black male may be internalizing tremendous personal burdens similar to those of the Black men who are non-college bound. To fully understand some of the complexities of the burdens that Black men carry on a college campus, the next section will look at one prominent racial identity theory and its applicability to Black men.

Racial Identity Development Theory

In order to fully understand the realities of African American students in the present study, an exploration into racial identity development theory was explored. This was undertaken in order to shed light on how the participants make sense of themselves and their relationships with others. Racial identity and Racial Identity Development Theory are defined by Helms (1990) as:

...a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group. . . racial identity development theory concerns the psychological implications of racial-group membership, that is belief systems that evolve in reaction to perceived differential racial-group membership. (p. 3)

If confronted with racial prejudice, the magnitude of one's response to any given incident depends on personal awareness, sensitivity, along with growth and maturation of the individual in interaction with his or her interpersonal environment (Franklin, 1999). The level of awareness and sensitivity to one's interpersonal environment is represented by what theorists define as the attributes and behavior manifested by the various stages of racial identity development (Franklin, 1999). According to Phinney (1990), racial and ethnic identity theories provide significant insight into how "individuals come to understand the implications of their ethnicity and make decisions about its role in their lives, regardless of the extent of their ethnic involvement" (p.64).

Due to the Black Power Movement of the late 1960s, African American identity development theories developed from the need to explain African American consciousness during this period (Cross & Vandiver, 1995). As a result, Cross' Nigrescence Theory emerged. It provided the foundation for racial identity theories because it detailed a process where the student transformed from a preexisting identity (non-African American) into one that is Afrocentric. The theory purported to explain the education and awareness involved in moving from the state of being "Negro" to the state of being "Black" (Cross & Vandiver, 1995). The theory is a model that explains how "assimilated as well as deracinated, deculturalized, or miseducated adolescents or Black adults are transformed" (Cross & Vandiver, 1995, p. 98). In 1991, Cross' model was revised to address cultural, social psychological and historical changes that occurred after the model was first introduced (Cross & Vandiver, 1995).

The Nigrescence Model (Cross, 1971, 1978, 1991) identified four stages that African Americans advance through when finding their identity: Preencounter, Encounter, Immersion-Emersion, and Internalization. In the first stage of Preencounter, the African American has absorbed and accepted many of the beliefs and values of the dominant White culture, including the notion that "White is right" and "Black is wrong." Though the internalization of negative Black stereotypes may be outside of his or her conscious awareness, the individual seeks to assimilate and be accepted by Whites, and actively or passively distances him/herself from other Blacks. The notion of White superiority is the dominant way of thinking during this stage.

Transition into the second stage, the Encounter phase, is typically precipitated by an event or series of events that forces the individual to acknowledge the impact of racism in one's life. While Cross and Vandiver (1995) acknowledge that it is difficult to change an identity that has already developed fully, there are circumstances that allow for such occurrences. These instances must be strong enough to shatter the person's current identity while providing glimpses and direction on the path that individual is to follow (Cross & Vandiver, 1995). For example, instances of social rejection by White friends or colleagues may convince an individual to resolve that many Whites will not view him as an equal. Faced with the reality that he cannot truly be White, the individual is forced to focus on his identity as a member of a group targeted by racism. Ultimately, a person at this stage moves from an anti-Black to a pro-Black stance when it comes to political and social issues (Cross & Vandiver, 1995).

The Immersion/Emersion stage is characterized by the simultaneous desire to

surround oneself with visible symbols of one's racial identity and an active avoidance of symbols of Whiteness (Cross & Vandiver, 1995). As Thomas Parham described, "At this stage, everything of value in life must be Black or relevant to Blackness. This stage is also characterized by a tendency to denigrate White people, simultaneously glorifying Black people. . . ." (Parham, 1989, p. 190). Evans et al. (1998) suggested that this stage "is a watershed period in which the individual discards remnants of the old identity and commits to person change" (p.75). In other words, individuals at this stage completely immerse themselves in African American culture. This might include changes in speech, hairstyle, and clothing. Also, individuals at this stage might become affiliated with predominately African American organizations; including historically Black fraternities and sororities. Additionally, hatred and anger towards Whites are common during this stage of development.

After working through immersion-emersion, internalization is the fourth and final stage where African Americans males learn to successfully internalize their identity. They have the salience to be Afrocentric. Internalization is the period for dissonance resolution (Cross & Vandiver, 1995). This helps individuals to "(a) to defend and protect himself from psychological insults that stem from having to live in a racist society, (b) to provide a sense of belonging and social anchorage, and (c) to provide a foundation or point of departure for carrying out transactions, with people, cultures, and human situations beyond the world of Blackness" (Cross & Vandiver, 1995, p. 113). This stage also presents a shift from the person worrying about how he is viewed by others to a self-confidence and inner peace. This is the point where the person tends to change his group identity and perceives a revitalized

personality (Cross & Vandiver, 1995). While still maintaining his connections with Black peers, the internalized individual is willing to establish meaningful relationships with Whites who acknowledge and are respectful of his self-definition. The individual is also ready to build coalitions with members of other oppressed groups (Tatum, 1994). Blackness becomes "the point of departure for discovering the universe of ideas, cultures and experiences beyond Blackness in place of mistaking Blackness as the universe itself (Cross, Parham, & Helms, 1991, p. 330).

According to Howard-Hamilton (1997), mentors play a very valuable role in each stage of the Nigrescence Model. During the preencounter stage, the mentor needs to provide a learning environment that is both supportive and structured. The mentor should avoid any discussions of racial, ethnic, or cultural differences. At the encounter stage, the mentor must focus on making the mentee aware of the good things about his culture and promote activities that allow for engagement in cross-cultural activities and programs (Howard-Hamilton, 1997). The ultimate goal during this stage is for the mentor to challenge the participants' misconceptions about racial groups.

The immersion-emersion stage affords the mentee an opportunity to self-review and reflect. Since the mentee may be consumed with being pro-Black and anti-White, the mentor should help the mentee explore the impact of one-sided thinking. During the internalization stage, the mentor should provide continuous opportunities for the mentee to engage in discussion with others from different cultural groups. Ultimately, the mentor should help guide the mentee towards finding supportive networks with individuals that have similar beliefs without regard to being Black or White (Howard-Hamilton, 1997).

Cokley (2002) tested Cross's (1991, 1995) revised racial identity model. The author's study consisted of 153 African American college students. The results of this study support Cross's theory of racial identity development. Cokley (2002) found that pre-encounter identities are associated with beliefs about mental and genetic deficiencies. Immersion-emersion attitudes are associated with beliefs of Black sexual prowess. Internalized Afrocentricity attitudes are associated with beliefs about the natural abilities of Blacks (Cokley, 2002),

Parham and Helms' (1985) also found a partial relationship between African American college student's identity and the Cross Model of Nigrescence. The authors found high self-esteem in students during the Encounter stage, but lower self-esteem was found in students during the Preencounter and Immersion-Emersion stages. The authors went on to warn about the applicability of the Cross Model by suggesting that identity development from an Afrocentric perspective is more reflective of an individual's "attitude" instead of the four stages offered in the Cross Model (Parham & Helms, 1985). In other words, the stages in the Cross Model assume a strategic move from one set of behaviors to another. Mitchell and Dell (1992) suggested that African Americans can "hold values and beliefs associated with various stages simultaneously, and the amount of each attitude may range from none to a maximum level" (p.39). The ability to move between each stage of development in the Cross Model ultimately depends on how individuals interact with Whites and other African Americans in their environment. Therefore, individual experiences will vary. Parham & Helms (1985) conclude that African Americans will move through Cross's identity development model at different

stages; moreover, some may never move through each and every stage. The next section will provide an overview of mentoring and its potential effects on the Black male.

Mentoring Overview & the Effects of Mentoring on the Black Male

This section will define mentoring and provide an overview of the impact that these relationships can have on students. This section will also include a glimpse into mentoring relationships through the lens of other disciplines outside of education. And finally, this section will examine how culturally responsive mentoring can be used as an intervention method by higher education institutions.

The concept of mentoring in academic literature goes back to *Homer's Odyssey*, which is a poem from ancient Greece written over 3000 years ago (Colley, 2002). The *Odyssey* tells the story of King Odysseus's lengthy travels undertaken to return from the Trojan War. During the King's absence, he entrusted his kingdom and the care of his infant son to Telemachus, a friend of many years to the king (Colley, 2002; Miller, 2002; Tolentino, 1999). The relationship between the king and Telemachus was seen as one that developed over years based on mutual affection and respect. According to Otto (1994), mentoring is a relationship based on mutual respect and made by choice, although the mentor has perceived success and/or power to influence this mentee. Daloz (1986) defined mentoring as a person who takes the time to help navigate a person through unfamiliar environments. Although the goal of mentoring relationships may differ depending on the relationship and the environmental setting, most mentoring relationships center on the goal of gaining knowledge (Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2007).

Goodyear (2006) defined mentoring as a process whereby the abilities of one single person is developed. This relationship can include career development or the mentor can assist the mentee in the area of “psychosocial” support or role modeling (Goodyear, 2006). According to Otto (1994), mentoring is a mutual relationship based on respect and is entered into on a voluntary basis by both parties. Furthermore, the mentor is viewed as an individual who has a vested interest in helping the other individual navigate through challenges and obstacles encountered in life (Daloz, 1986).

Simplistically speaking, Bell (1996) described mentoring as a way to help another person to learn and grow in a way that is valuable and beneficial to individual development.

Academically speaking, Brown (1995) viewed mentoring as a way to empower African American students to overcome challenges related to discrimination, along with overcoming obstacles related to inadequate academic preparation. Brown based his views on his observations of several “at risk” mentoring programs in Canada. According to the author, if a mentoring program allows relationships to develop naturally and not forced over a period of time, the impact on the mentee could be positive but the overall potential of these relationships will require constant follow-up research (Brown, 1995).

Allen (1992) and Fleming (1984) found that depression and isolation experienced by Black males at White institutions can lead to low levels of academic motivation. Furthermore, the authors have also found that African American males are generally unhappy with their experiences at these institutions. Failure to attain a college degree before leaving some PWIs has been attributed to negative encounters and experiences at these universities (Tinto, 1987). Additionally, Padilla, Trevino, Gonzales and Trevino

(1997) found that African American students are more likely to persist when they have supportive relationships and positive social interactions.

Palmer & Young (2008-2009) conducted a study that focused on factors that helped 11 African American males succeed academically. According to the authors, one of the major reasons the participants were able to persist was due to the formation of mentoring relationships with their faculty (Palmer & Young, 2008-2009). The students in this study attributed their academic success to the relationships they formed with faculty. When the students described their relationships with faculty, they used words that “care, concern, and empathy” to describe the feelings of support they received on campus (Palmer & Young, 2008-2009). Similarly, Scales, et al. (2005) conducted a study to explore the significance of school/business partnerships and the positive outcomes of those relationships with urban high school students. According to Scales et al. (2005), students need more than academic instruction to succeed in school. They also need such experiences as a caring school environment, close relationships with staff, plentiful opportunities to explore their interests and talents, and connections to the real world outside of school (Scales et al., 2005). Although the relationships afforded students in the Scales study were not traditional mentoring relationships, the outcomes were similar to those in the Palmer & Young (2008-2009) study. The study highlighted the important benefits of relationships that incorporate support and motivation of a mentee or urban youth.

Strayhorn (2008) undertook a similar study that examined the association between supportive relationships and success in college for Black men. According to Strayhorn

(2008), the supportive relationships variable had a strong correlation to satisfaction with college. Strayhorn used data obtained from an existing survey and presented statistics to support his research findings without hearing the stories of the students who participated in the original survey. Furthermore, no data were presented to indicate if any of these supportive relationships were culturally responsive; the same opportunity for clarity existed in the Palmer & Young research study as well.

Authors Brady and O'Regan (2009) evaluated the effectiveness of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program in Western Ireland. The authors interviewed 12 mentoring pairs to gauge the impact that these relationships had on youth in Ireland. The authors conducted interviews on two separate occasions; once when the relationships were established and the next following an interval of 6 months or more (Brady & O'Regan, 2009). Ultimately, the study undertaken by Brady and O'Regan (2009) concluded that the mentees made drastic improvements socially, academically, and made reductions in problem behaviors. The next section will briefly review the impact of mentoring outside the education arena.

Mentoring in other disciplines

Mentoring and mentoring programs that take place outside of the educational arena have similar tenets to the traditional framework of mentoring; however, alternative opportunities for mentoring may develop, given the elements of choice, time, and resources (Hayes, 2005). According to Hayes, mentoring programs in the corporate sector or other professional organizations outside of education, usually make a deliberate effort to recruit mentors who are willing to share their industry expertise (Hayes, 2005),

According to Hayes, the mentoring matches in the corporate sector are usually successful if both parties are willing to devote time and energy on a voluntary basis to the relationship. Unlike many of the formal or unstructured relationships in education, relationships in the corporate sector are usually formed with the understanding that there is a time commitment needed to reap the benefits of gaining expertise in a given field or to accomplish a set of pre-established goals identified at the onset of the relationship (Hayes, 2005).

One such benefit is the need for mentoring to help cope with the stress and trauma associated with organizational change. Gram and Hall (1989) found that individuals who are in stressful situations are more inclined to building mentoring relationships with others as a means to manage work related stress. The authors conducted a study 161 participants in middle and upper management to gauge their attitudes towards mentoring and the value they place on mentoring relationships. The authors went on to conclude that mentoring, although valued and favored by a majority of the participants, more efforts need to be made in industry to help workers benefit from having supportive relationships as a means to balance stress. A higher degree of stress is usually associated with jobs held by middle to under level managers in the corporate sector, and mentoring relationships have been shown to be an effective tool to combat the demands associated with positions of power (Blake-Beard, 1999).

Due to the needs of the changing organizational structure of the corporate sector and other entities, Eby (1997) conducted a study to examine mentoring in the context of the changing nature of the work environment. In order to keep up with the increasingly

dynamic changes in organizational environments, the author indicated that mentoring approaches have to be changed to adapt to the changes in career trends and the workplace. The concept of mentoring can no longer address coping with stress and professional development. Mentoring relationships have to also focus on the needs that arise from organizational change (Elby, 1997). The next section will take a look at mentoring with an emphasis on culture, which Johnson-Bailey & Cervero (2004) refers to it as a “delicate dance that juxtaposes group norms and societal pressures and expectations with individual personality characteristics” (p. 7).

Culturally Responsive Mentoring

Mitchell & Stewart (2012) described culturally responsive mentoring as a theoretical framework for supporting the high school to college matriculation and retention of African American males. According to the authors, culturally responsive mentoring is an effective tool to combat the achievement challenges faced by African American males (Mitchell & Stewart, 2012). The authors examined data from the African American Male mentoring program at Penn State University. Based on their findings, they were able to conclude that culturally responsive mentoring does increase academic achievement and retention of Black males (Mitchell & Stewart, 2012).

According to Gordon et al. (2009), very little research exists that examines the effects of culturally responsive mentoring intervention strategies for young Black men. Most existing research has only focused on the gap between standardized test scores of White versus Black students. Also, several studies have compared grade-point averages

of White versus Black students without analyzing environmental factors that play a role in the lives of these students (Gordon et al., 2009).

Harper (2004) conducted a research study that focused on student engagement between Black males versus Black females in college. Harper's study was conducted at a historically Black college in the mid-Atlantic. According to Harper, several studies have explored the undergraduate experiences of African American students, but few studies have explored these relationships at an HBCU (Harper, 2004). Student/faculty interaction was the main factor that distinguished the males from the females in the study (Harper, 2004). Harper found that Black men were able to succeed academically and attributed this success to the relationships they formed with faculty and administrators. Harper did note the need to explore these relationships further through future research, but the benefits of supportive mentoring relationships spoke volumes in Harper's study

Culturally responsive mentoring calls for an institutional commitment to incorporate Afrocentric mentoring and programming efforts that target Black men (Mitchell & Stewart, 2012). Like the mentoring program at Penn State University, several universities have instituted similar programs on various campuses around the United States. The next section will highlight some of these Black male initiatives that exist at different institutions and will discuss the impact these initiatives are having on the Black male.

Black Male Initiatives

There are several Black male initiatives on college campuses around the United States that focus on supporting the high school to college matriculation and retention of

African American males. Furthermore, these initiatives are designed to support Black males as they navigate through their perspectives institutions (Palmer & Gasman, 2008). Support can come in many ways. For the purpose of this section, I will highlight some of the programs that focus on the success of African American males; Penn GSE Grad Prep Academy, Sam Houston State University, The Ohio State, and UCLA.

The Penn GSE Grad Prep Academy is a part of the Center for the Study of Race and Equity. The director of this program is Shaun Harper. According to the school's website (<http://www.gse.upenn.edu/equity/content/mission-and-services>), the program is designed to introduce students who have had few (if any) prior interactions with same-race male teachers, professors, and educational leaders to career possibilities in the field of education. The ultimate program goal is to prepare African American males for admission to leading research universities, including the University of Pennsylvania.

All accepted program participants receive an all-expense paid four-day visit to Philadelphia. During their time on the Penn campus, the participants attend workshops on searching for graduate programs, writing effective application statements, and crafting research agendas. Moreover, they interact with Penn GSE faculty, graduate students, and Black male GSE alumni who are presently professors of education at other institutions. Moreover, the academy pays for each participant to take a three-month Kaplan course to prepare for the GRE. Additionally, each academy scholar is paired with a Ph.D. student in education who mentors him through the graduate school application process, offers feedback on essays and other application materials, and advises his selection of graduate programs. According to Harper & Davis (2012), programs like the Penn GSE Grad Prep

Academy are needed to help with the teacher shortage in the K-12 arena, along with the shortage of African American males in the post-secondary professoriate.

Another program worth discussion is housed at Sam Houston State University. This program is called AAMI (African American Male Initiative). According to the program's website, the program's ultimate goal is to support the achievement, retention, and graduation rates for African American males. The program provides events where national speakers come out to speak to program participants about career opportunities, in addition to workshops, tutoring, and academic collaborations across campus departments. Retrieved from (<http://www.shsu.edu/centers/sam-center/mentoring/aim.html>).

Sam Houston University has also established a mentoring program called E.L.I.T.E., which stands for "Establishing Leadership In and Through Education). Under the ELITE program role models and mentoring support are provided to African American and Latino male students. According to the program's website, minority males participating in the program at Sam Houston have shown improved persistence rates compared to control groups outside of the program. What makes the program at Sam Houston even more impactful is the fact that mentees are paired with minority mentors with the hope of drawing upon similar cultural and educational experiences. The program at Sam Houston also provides academic support, monitored academic progress, and study skills management. Since the program's implementation, graduation rates for African American males have gone from 44% in 2004, compared to 52.9% for Black males in 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.shsu.edu/centers/sam-center/ELITE/>.

According to LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs (1997), college and university mentoring programs that target African American males are very valuable because the factors affecting Black men are different from those of women. The authors also highlighted the fact that academic reasons are not always the culprit of failure by African American males. Black men need to learn how to set priorities, balance relationships with females, and learn to navigate campus life (1997). Programs like the Black male initiative at Sam Houston not only focus on the academic component but through mentoring, students learn to become better students overall.

The third program reviewed was the Black male initiative at The Ohio State University. According to the school's website, the program was first created as a result of national statistic concerning the performance of African American male students in college. Like other programs, the initial goal was the improve retention and graduation rates for the undergraduate population at Ohio State University. The Black male initiative at Ohio State started out as a collaborative effort by the University's diversity office, the office of student affairs, and other members of the university's faculty and staff.

Retrieved from <http://odi.osu.edu/bell-national-resource-center/>. This collaborative effort at Ohio State University helps to further illustrate the point echoed by several researchers (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997; Bush & Bush, 2010; Davis, 1994) that the responsibility to address the needs of African American males goes beyond a given department; the entire institution has to play a role in order for these initiatives to be successful.

The program at Ohio State University has several great components that target Black men. The Black male initiative has an Early Arrival Program, which is designed to give incoming African Americans males a head start on adjusting to college life. In this program, students learn about resources and strategies that help with their academic success. Furthermore, the students learn ways to develop their professional and leadership skills. Moreover, the students have a unique opportunity to engage with faculty, staff, and other students and alumni who are committed to their success. Retrieved from <http://odi.osu.edu/bell-national-resource-center/>.

There are several other programs being carried out under the Black male initiative, one significant program that focuses on mentoring is called the Middle School Mentoring Program. According to the university's website, the program utilizes a group mentoring model, whereby undergraduate males serve as mentors to seventh-grade African American males at a local school for boys. The mentors interact with the students on a weekly basis; from lunch to workshops, focus groups, and social trips. The mentoring program focuses on areas that will help navigate these young men through life and ultimately aid in helping them persist towards obtaining a degree in higher education. Retrieved from <http://odi.osu.edu/bell-national-resource-center/>.

The Black male initiative at The Ohio State University mentoring model does a great job incorporating what Gordon (2009) calls a "culturally centered" mode of instruction that can help the development of racial identity and a commitment to the community. Using the Ohio State model, the Black male students in the mentoring program have an opportunity to give back to their community and work in a reciprocal

relationship with one another, which hopefully will help develop a sense of pride that will hopefully impact feelings toward academic success and attitudes towards education.

The final program highlighted in this section is the Black Male Institute (BMI) at UCLA. Per UCLA's website, the BMI was founded in 2009 to address concerns about equity and access for Black males in education. The BMI program at UCLA has several goals; ranging from conducting research, intervention strategies, and programs that enrich the experiences of Black males in the US. Furthermore, the program has hosted hundreds of middle and high school students on campus to participate in workshops that focus on preparing Black males for college. Like The Ohio State program, the program at UCLA collaborates with educators, faculty/staff, and community leaders. According to the school's website, the primary focus of the BMI program centers on improving the educational and life experiences of Black males. Retrieved from <https://gseis.ucla.edu/about/>.

The BMI program's retention initiatives are primarily carried out through a program called "Lumina", which specifically targets freshmen and transfer students (African American males) at UCLA. The students in the Lumina program meet and engage in dialogue that focuses on their experiences at UCLA. During this dialogue, the students are encouraged to think critically about their experiences in an attempt to foster and promote clarity and understanding. Furthermore, African American males at UCLA are afforded an opportunity to develop mentoring relationships with campus and community leaders. Retrieved from <https://gseis.ucla.edu/about/>.

One major parallel that exists with all four programs discussed centers on the opportunities that are created which allow Black males to develop mentoring relationships with positive role models from the community, faculty, staff, and the business community as well. Harris & Smith (1999) have written about the important role these relationships can have on the lives of Black males. Mentoring is a developmental process where each stage promotes skill development, self-confidence, and equips a mentee with the tools to eventually mentor others (Harris & Smith, 1999). The aforementioned mentoring model will be discussed furthering in the mentoring section of this review.

Harris & Smith (1999) discussed a model of mentoring called the Afrocentric Mentoring Model. According to the authors, this model emerged after studying the experiences of over 100 African American college students. There are several components that make up this model. The areas of focus consist of the following: unity/collective work, nurturing, skill development, self-confidence, collaboration, and faith. According to Harris & Smith (1999), this mentoring model will empower the mentee and the mentor to expand their ability to work with African American students and promote and encourage the importance of academic pursuits that hopefully can be used as a tool or support strategy to improve the chances of student success. Although the initiatives that were discussed earlier make no reference to this mentoring model, they all use or incorporate some component of Harris and Smith's Afrocentric mentoring model. Although highlighted in some of the Black male initiatives previously discussed, the next section will focus on the role of race and gender in mentoring relationships.

The Role of Race/Gender in Mentoring Relationships

Dreher and Cox (1996) explored the dynamics of mentoring relationships based on race and color. According to the authors, successful mentoring relationships evolve due to similarities in life experiences. Dreher and Cox (1996) added that the majority of the Black participants in their study reported that mentoring relationships, where both parties are of the same gender and racial background, attributed to the formation of close personal and supportive relationships.

Rhodes et al. (2002) found that African American males are more comfortable confiding in and talking to mentors of the same race and gender. According to the authors, Black men viewed their mentors as a source of unconditional support, unlike those Black males who were paired with mentors of a different race and gender. The authors also noted that same race and gender matches were responsible for an increase in overall self-worth of African American males. Most importantly, the authors found a gradual reduction in perceived academic competence from African American males who were matched with cross-race mentors in comparison to African males in same race/gender relationships (Rhodes et al., 2002).

On the other hand, several researchers have written about the benefits of cross-race mentoring relationships (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Henkin & Rogers, 1992). These studies have highlighted the potential benefits of establishing trust but emphasize that trust is not a guarantee for a successful match. Henkin & Rogers (1992) indicated that there may be a shortage of qualified same race mentors, so cross-race mentoring relationships may be a matter of necessity in some instances.

Johnson-Bailey & Cervero (2004) have both written about their experiences as they relate to cross-cultural mentoring and the benefits of this mentoring approach. Both authors advocate the advantages of such a mentoring relationship. Johnson-Bailey goes into great detail explaining the successes experienced as a result of being mentored by a White male (while being an African American woman); she highlights factors such as support, trust, and sincerity. However, Johnson-Bailey also wrote candidly about issues related to establishing trust with the mentor in the early stages of their relationship. She even acknowledged that establishing trust is easier in same race mentoring relationships. Likewise, Padilla (1994) has mentioned in his writings that trust is more easily established if both parties have similar world views, coupled with the ability to have open and candid discussions about race.

Chapter Summary

Based on the literature reviewed, the most common theme that emerged is the benefit that mentoring can have on the life of a Black male, especially when it comes to supporting academic success. Another theme that emerged from the literature was the importance of student/faculty relationships, particularly in college. The literature overwhelmingly supports the notion that Black males need a system of support in higher education. Hirt et al. (2008) summed this up well in his research study that focused on the importance of supportive relationships from the perspective of faculty/administrators. According to Hirt et al. (2008), "...student-focused relationships at HBCUs are designed to facilitate a shared moral responsibility to encourage cultural advancement...by instilling a sense of cultural connectedness through nurturing relationships with students,

administrators are intentionally creating an inclusive climate that is designed to promote success among African Americans” (p. 220).

After reviewing existing literature on mentoring and the plight of Black men in pursuit of their education, one important component that is missing from the literature centers on the role that culturally responsive mentoring relationships play in the lives of African American men. Additionally, there is a significant lack of literature that explores the experiences of Black males who are engaged in mentoring relationships with mentors of the same race and gender, especially at a PWI in the South. Phenomenology, a qualitative research methodology, afforded me an opportunity to explore the impact that mentoring can have on the lives of African American males at South University. By using the imperative approach to this methodology, this afforded me an opportunity to tell the stories of other Black males attending South University, while allowing me an opportunity to reflect on my own personal experiences as a Black male matriculating at the university. Chapter three will lay out the steps that were undertaken to accomplish this investigation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the design used in investigating the influence that same race/gender mentoring has on persistence of academically successful African American males who have matriculated to their junior, senior year, or a recent graduate at a public predominantly White four-year institution in the South. This chapter will provide a detailed description of the researcher's subjectivity, participants, the site selection, data collection and analysis procedures, and the research method used. the following questions framed this study:

1. What are the experiences of junior and senior undergraduate (or recent graduate) African American male students at South University who have formed mentoring relationships with another African American male?
2. How has the mentoring relationship helped these students navigate their experience(s) on campus?
3. To what extent does same race/gender mentoring promote persistence among African American males who are successful in college?
- 4.

The researcher used phenomenology to explore the above research questions. In order to fully understand the impact that same race/gender mentoring has on the participants in this study, the above questions were designed to examine how successful African American males make meaning of their experiences in these mentoring relationships.

Phenomenology is a research methodology pioneered by Edmund Husserl. According to Moustakas (1994), "...Husserl developed a philosophic system rooted in subjective openness..." In other words, phenomenology has been described as knowledge based on perceptions of those experiences that bring about a consciousness or awakening in an individual. Phenomenological research attempts to describe the lived experiences of those individuals under study, and a phenomenological researcher will attempt to analyze the data captured using this methodology (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990, 2002; Willig, 2001). According to Jones (2005) and Moustakas (1994), phenomenology is premised around nine principles: (1) Focuses on the appearance of things, (2) Is concerned with uncovering the essence of the experience as according to those who experience it, (3) Seeks meaning and understanding resulting from intuition and reflection on conscious acts of experience, (4) Is committed to revealing vivid descriptions of experience rather than searching for explanations or analysis, (5) Study is rooted in questions that provide direction and focus meanings in themes, (6) Subject and object are interrelated – perceptions and the experience interrelate to make the objective subjective, and the subjective objective, (7) Intersubjective reality is woven throughout the entire investigative process, with the perception beginning with the study participant's own sense of what the experience is and means, (8) Primary evidence of the research is the data of experience, and (9) Research question(s) must be carefully designed as it serves as the focus of the study and provide a rich portrayal of the experience.

According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology is described as knowledge based on perceptions of those experiences that bring about a consciousness or awakening in an individual. Phenomenological research attempts to describe the lived experiences of those individuals under study, and a phenomenological researcher will attempt to analyze the data captured using this methodology. Additionally, Husserl believed that the primary purpose of phenomenology is to capture consciousness, which is true reality that equates to phenomena (Moustakas, 1994; Sokolowski, 2000).. Therefore, words and phrases like, “what are the experiences”, “what does it mean”, and “how are...” are common words used in phenomenological research questions. Under this methodology, the researcher has to formulate research questions that allow stories to emerge from the participants by allowing them to give rich descriptions of the phenomena under study (i.e. the experiences of African American males in same race/gender mentoring relationships).

Moustakas (1994) described the fundamental process to arrive at knowledge using phenomenology: Epoche, Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction, and Imaginative Variation. Epoche means to remain neutral and not judge; refrain from the way things are ordinarily perceived. Once typical understandings and judgments are set aside, the phenomenon is given a second look with fresh eyes in a naïve fashion.

After Epoche, the Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction phase takes place. Moustakas (1994) called this process transcendental because it moves beyond the everyday to the pure ego in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time. The term “phenomenological” is used because it transforms the world into mere phenomena. Additionally, “reduction” leads us back to the source of the meaning and

existence of the phenomenon. If these steps are undertaken, the goal would allow a researcher to create a textural description of the meanings and experiences from the vantage point of the research participants.

Interpretative Phenomenology

Interpretative phenomenology was used by the researcher in this study. The interpretative approach is distinctive from other phenomenological approaches because it allows the researcher an opportunity to concentrate on the phenomenon under review through the discovery and interpretation of concealed meaning embedded in the words of participant narratives (Rapport, 2000). In other words, this approach allows a researcher to study human consciousness by focusing on the world that the study participants subjectively experience. By so doing, deeper insights into human nature can be gained (Willig, 2001).

There were several reasons to use the interpretative phenomenological approach. First, it was important to understand the shared (or common) experiences of individuals related to this study since I am an African American male attending the same university. Second, interpretative phenomenology is interested in what participants experienced and how they experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). By understanding these shared experiences, I am hoping to develop a deeper understanding of African-American male students' experiences at a PWI in the South. Third, interpretative phenomenology is an interpretative process (Creswell 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990; Willig, 2001). The experiences these students encountered form their own realities. In forming the

essence of their realities, I plan to use the participants' words to formulate my interpretation of their perspectives.

Finally, an interpretative phenomenological approach was appropriate because it welcomed self-reflection. Since my own background as an African-American male student is my reality, my background shaped my interpretation of the experience. Furthermore, self-reflection allowed me to bracket my biases and put my thoughts and perceptions aside so that I could gain an understanding of the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). I will go more into detail about my own subjectivity and motivation to carry out this study in the next section.

Statement of Subjectivity

I remember growing up in the segregated South back in the early 1970s. My mother and father worked hard to provide the basic needs for their children. Statistically, we were considered a part of the middle (or upper middle) class, but we lived in a neighborhood where most of our neighbors lived below the poverty level. I can think of endless stories where I was discriminated against, along with my parents and siblings. Moreover, I remember how I felt going from the security of an all-Black neighborhood where my neighbors considered my family "privileged" or "uppity" into mainstream society, where we were judged based on the color of our skin without regard to the values that my parents instilled in their kids. According to mainstream society, we were just Black people who in their eyes were "ignorant welfare recipients" and a burden to the society.

Those preconceived notions followed me into the public school system. I was placed in remedial classes despite my academic performance. This experience led me to believe that the school system had no interest or desire to tap into my full potential. Therefore, college preparatory courses were not an option. In the eyes of teachers and the administration, I was only seen as a candidate for vocational studies.

Based on the experiences I had at an early age, and even today, I think they are responsible for shaping my stance on research and my research interest. As a victim of racism and a constant recipient of the pre-conceived notions of others, I am extremely interested in research that taps into the plight of African American men. Moreover, I am interested in research that brings about change: i.e., dispelling the negative myths of the Black man.

During my time as a student at South University, I have felt isolated and alone, and on many occasions I have felt unsupported by members of faculty and the administration. It took some time for me to snap out of feeling depressed and alone as an African American male. I even continue to have my occasional bouts with depression. But more importantly, I wanted to make sure no other African American males were experiencing the same frustrations. After becoming more and more involved in student activities on campus, I began to forge relationships with other African American male students through student government, class facilitation, and other organizational involvement. I slowly started to realize that several of them were dealing with similar frustrations; problems coping, feeling alone, victims of racism, etc. In order to counter balance the issues several African American males were facing on campus, I made my

self-available to several undergraduate males; to some in the capacity of big brother and to others, I was considered a mentor.

Ultimately, I was able to have an impact on the lives of several students here at South University. However, I was only one person, so I knew there were several other African American males on campus I had not had an opportunity to come in contact with. However, the stories of these students need to be told. Undertaking this research study was one of the ways I felt I could give other African American males on campus an opportunity to tell their stories. Also, knowing the impact that I have been able to personally have on the lives of other African American male students at South University has been very impactful. During my own episodes of depression, I draw upon these positive experiences to help give me the motivation to continue to persist.

As a researcher, I realize that mentoring my not be a useful tool for helping every African American male persist at South University. Nevertheless, I was cognizant of the impact my relationships have had on several students, and hopefully through this study the awareness levels will be raised regarding the need for same race/gender mentoring relationships on the campus of South University.

Milner (2007) took a stance on researcher positionality stating a researcher must be willing to disrupt and extend notions of normality. In other words, research that is deeply rooted in race can no longer be conducted based on the established norms of one group of people. As a researcher, I am hoping that this research study shows that “different” does not have to be considered abnormal.

After having several successful mentoring relationships - both past and present, I know first-hand the impact that such a relationship can have on the academic success of a young Black male and an older undergraduate student. From all existing literature, it is very clear that there are major benefits to mentoring African American males in general. Mentoring can have a major impact on the lives of Black men. However, there is a strong lack of research to support the benefits of a mentor/mentee relationship between two Black males.

Furthermore, I feel there is a strong lack of educational literature focused on the plight of Black men geographically, particularly in the South. From my perspective, the poverty, oppression, and racism that have a long history of existence in the South could somehow have a profound impact on the life of African Americans and their pursuit of an education, especially Black men.

Moreover as a Black male, I feel obligated to make a contribution to existing research with regard to the plight of Black men when it comes to retention and persistence. One way to fill the gap in regard to existing literature is to explore this phenomenon through the lived experiences of Black men. Furthermore, the mentor needs to have a voice as well, which might be worth exploring in future research. Hopefully, through my dialogues with these individuals, I can present research findings that make suggestions that schools and colleges can use mentoring as an intervention method to increase the number of Black men who persist towards obtaining a degree in higher education while attending a PWI in the South.

Ontological & Epistemological basis of study

In addressing the ontological and epistemological basis of my research, Andrade (2009) says one must start by answering the ontological question, “What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?” This is the first step in the definition of how a researcher should approach a research problem. For me, my reality is deeply rooted in my culture and up-bringing.

According to Guda & Lincoln (1994), the epistemological question therefore has to answer the following, “What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known?” This question, according to the authors must be answered in a consistent way with one’s ontological view. Green et al. discussed two approaches to knowing: “externalist” and “internalist” (Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2006). According to the internalist approach, there is a heavy reliance on the role that the mind, culture, and language affects ones concept of knowledge. When I think about my understanding of knowledge and how this understanding was developed, I can see how my culture and environment played a role in how I cogitate on my own understanding of knowledge. Additionally, my culture plays a major role in how I approach research and how it impacts my research interest. As I self-reflect on my life, I can see that I approach the conversation of knowledge though the lens of an interpretivist; embracing the internalist approach, while having a desire to explore phenomena that impacts the Black male.

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to recruit ten participants from the various mentoring programs that at the research site. Additionally, participants were also

recruited based on the researcher’s personal knowledge of existing mentoring relationships based on the criteria previously stated. Table 3.a shows collective demographics for all participants.

Table 3.a – Collective Demographics

Participant	Geographic Location	Mentor	Educational Classification	Major	Parents’ Education
Walter Brown	Midlands, SC	Grad Students (X2)	Senior	STEM	Both- College Graduates
Hayton Jackson	Lower, SC	External Teacher	Junior	Liberal Arts	Both – High School Graduates
Keith Howard	South, GA	Professor	Senior	STEM	Both - High School Graduates
John Daniels	Northeastern US	Administrator	Senior	Liberal Arts	Mom - High School Graduate
Isaac Brown	Midlands, SC	Recent Graduate	Junior	Liberal Arts	Both- College Graduates
Charles Roberts	Upstate, SC	Administrator	Graduate Student	Liberal Arts	Both- College Graduates
Alexander Jones	Upstate, SC	External Graduate Student	Senior	STEM	Both- College Graduates
Thomas Martin	Upstate, SC	Administrator	Senior	Liberal Arts	Mom – High School Graduate
Brock Lewis	Southern, MS	Professor/ Administrator	Graduate Student	STEM	Both – College Graduates
Travis Taylor	Eastern, GA	External Working Professional	Junior	Liberal Arts	Mom – 8th Grade Education

Participants were recruited from the following at the research site:

- Undergraduate junior or senior Black males students at South University;
- Recent Black male graduates from the university within the last three years which coincides with my time of enrollment at the research site;
- Black male students who participated in one of the on campus mentoring programs; South University has two major mentoring programs. The first program is a peer mentoring program designed for first year students of color. The program aim is to assist these students with the transition to South University. First years students are assigned to upper-class peer mentors who are trained to support new students in areas like campus involvement, resource identification, and the overall transition to South University. The second major mentoring program on campus is a peer mentoring program targeted for honor students. Unlike the previously discussed program, this program is open to all student, without regard to race. The primary goals are similar to the first mentoring program; however, in the honors mentoring program mentors are assigned small groups of students to mentor. Furthermore, most of the program participants are housed in the same community;
- Black male students who are members of the Black male education initiative program on campus. The goal of this initiative is to increase the percentage of minority teachers in the state's lowest performing school districts;
- Black male students who participate in one of the historically Black fraternities mentoring program; or,

- A combination of all of the above.

Each participant was also required to be in a current mentoring relationship with an African American male in order to participate in the current study. The relationship could have been established through one of the formal mentoring programs on campus or informally. No other restrictions or requirements were placed on the mentor. The mentoring relationship could have been established before the mentee arrived on campus or afterwards. Furthermore, mentors were not required to be members of faculty/staff at South University. As long as the mentee identified a person as their mentor, that acknowledgement constituted a mentoring relationship for the purpose of this study. The identities of the participants were protected by using pseudonyms in place of the real names of each participant.

Site Selection

South University is the site selected for this research study. South University is a top 25 public university that sits in the Southeastern region of the United States. While the enrollment flutes, the university has an undergraduate population of over 17, 300 students, and a graduate population of over 4,000 students. The university's total enrollment as of fall 2015 was 22, 698 students. The total African American student population was 1,419. Of that number, only 728 were males. The total White population consisted of over 17,600 students. African American students made up less than 6% of the total student population, while African American males made up less than 4% of the total population (Research Site Website, 2016).

African American enrollment has risen slightly over the past few years. In 2012, the school had a total African American enrollment of 1,272. That number dropped in 2013, and yet only increased by 157 students in 2014. In 2015 the number increased again, but only by 72 students. Since 2012, the total African American population at South University has only increased by 147 students (Research Site Website, 2016).

With such a large White population and so few African American students, South University was chosen as the site selection for this study because the researcher knows firsthand what it feels like to be an African American male on a campus where Black men make up less than 4% of the total student population. The researcher also hopes the results of this study will raise awareness about the need for same race/gender mentoring for African American males.

Data Collection & Analysis

Using an interpretative phenomenological approach, the most common method for data collection is the use of semi-structured interview questions (Creswell, 1998; Merriam & Associates 2002; Patton, 1990, 2002; Willig, 2001). The primary source of data will be the phenomenological interview. “The phenomenological interview involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). With this in mind, the researcher designed semi-structured interview questions that refrained from leading participants to a yes or no answer; instead the questions afforded the participants an opportunity to respond without any influence on the part of the researcher. Furthermore, the questions were designed to give the participants an opportunity to tell their story about the dynamics experienced between

both the mentor and mentee. There were a total of 15 semi-structured interview questions (Appendix D) used for the interview.

During the interview process, I took written notes based on my own observations; things I saw, and experienced. Furthermore, I kept a reflective journal during every stage of the research process to memo additional thoughts, questions, or internal conversations with myself; in addition to dialogue exchanged with my participants that might evoke further analysis or evaluation. Reflection of one's own perceptions, conceptions, and processes should occur throughout the process and is usually captured in a systematic fashion by keeping a reflexive journal (Smith, 2007). The data collected was immediately transcribed after each interview.

After data transcription, I performed member checks (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). Member checking was used to improve the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the research (Harper & Cole, 2012). Each participant was sent a copy of their individual transcripts to ensure that each participant had an opportunity to give feedback and acknowledge that each interview was transcribed and captured correctly. After initial transcripts were approved by each participant, I started the data analysis process using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which is concerned with making meaning of the participants' experiences (Willig, 2001). The first step required me to read and re-read the interview text, followed by making notes that reflected my initial thoughts and observations as a researcher. The second stage of analysis required me to identify and label emergent themes that characterized each section of the text. Next the themes were clustered together and given labels that capture their essence. The fourth

stage of analysis involved the production of a summary table of the structured themes for each individual participant. Finally, the themes were intergraded into an inclusive list of master themes list that reflected the experiences of the group of participants as a whole (Willig, 2001).

After the master theme list was generated, I summed up each prevailing theme in the findings section in an attempt to reconstruct the lived experiences of my participants. Finally, I followed-up with an additional member check to give each participant an opportunity to advise me if I truly captured their interviews, along with their agreement to the themes that derived from an analysis of the data.

Chapter Summary

Phenomenology was the selected method that was used to undertake the study just discussed. This chapter explained how interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to describe the phenomenon of same race/gender mentoring as experienced by the participants in this study. Using IPA (Willig, 2001), the researcher was able to analyze and interpret the transcripts into a story, by employing meaningful structural elements to illustrate the phenomenon of same race/gender mentoring. No research method will ever be able to fully describe people's experiences, what they think, or where they derive their meaning of life. It can simply provide an overview of a particular case or situation, their experiences, and the realities they hold for the world they live in (Hoepfl, 1997). This research is not intended to prove or disprove a theory, policy, or action. Rather, phenomenology has been chosen for this study to capture the experiences of the participants, allowing their story to be told and their voices to be heard. Chapter

four will provide an introduction of each participant. Afterwards, the findings will be presented.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of ten African American males who were involved in a same sex and gender mentoring relationship. This chapter will present the findings from the data collected from the interviews with the research participants. This chapter is broken into four sections. In Section I, each mentee will be introduced and described so the reader will become familiar with their early childhood and their journey towards attending college. The reader will also have an opportunity to learn about their early influences and early mentoring experiences. In Section II, the structural elements or master themes that make up the phenomenon of same race/gender mentoring are shared. Section III presents the finding and their relationship to the research questions. Lastly, Section IV summarizes the chapter.

Section I: The Participants/Mentees

This interpretative phenomenological study involved ten African American males who are currently attending South University. The participants were purposely selected to participate in the study based on the selection criteria previously mentioned in chapter three. Consent and agreement to participate in this study were obtained from each participant. Because confidentiality was vital to the study, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants and their mentors.

This section gives an introduction into the early lives of each participant. Here the reader will get a glimpse into their childhood and see each participant's journey from their neighborhoods to college. First collective demographic information will be

presented. Secondly, each participant will be introduced separately so the reader will get an understanding of their upbringing, early influences, and their views on academic achievement. Finally, I will share my closing thoughts on the collective demographics of the participants.

Collective Demographics of Participants

Information regarding each participant's background was gathered during the interview process. Each interview afforded an opportunity to delve into the dynamics of each participant's household and get a glimpse into their early lives. The findings regarding their collective demographics included household, location, age, early influences, and other relevant information.

Most of the participants interviewed were from the South. Only one participant was from an area outside of the South. However, location played a major role in shaping each participant's motivation for attending college. The majority of the participants from the South came from two parent household, and academic achievement was overly stressed in each household. Of those participants from single family household, academic success was equally emphasized by the one parent, which was always the mother based on the participant responses.

All participants are between the ages of 21 to 27. Some of them participated in early mentoring programs, but the majority had never been exposed to a formalized mentoring program before attending college. However, several of the participants identified individuals they considered as influential role models or informal mentors. Furthermore, I was able to collect information on early influences that played a

significant role in shaping each participant's views as they relate to the importance of academic success, and how each participant's background influenced their individual stance on the value of an education.

One of the most interesting pieces of data collected in this study surrounded the role that environmental influences played in a few of the participant's desire to escape from home and attend college. Two participants, in particular, grew up in what they called the "projects", and each one indicated that leaving that environment was one of the number one motivators for attending college. Additionally, this study revealed the crucial role that a mother's influence can have in motivating a child to want a better outcome in life. Each participant that grew up in the projects had strong mothers who pushed them to not succumb to the negative influences in their neighborhoods.

Finally, as part of the demographic data, most of the participants lived in what they considered a "color blind" world; they didn't see race. In their eyes, there was no "Black" or "White". They told stories of getting along with everyone equally. Although there were a few exceptions, most attended predominately White elementary and high schools and most of them were honor students with 3.5 or above GPAs. Academic achievement was either stressed by their parents, grandparents, or other individuals they considered mentors or role models.

Walter Brown

Walter grew up in the South. His family is originally from the Charleston, SC area, but he grew up in the southern part of South Carolina. Both of his parent attended college. His mother and father both graduated from a Historically Black College

(HBCU). His mother is a teacher and his father is an engineer. Walter has two siblings; a sister and a brother. His brother graduated from an HBCU, and his sister is currently attending an HBCU in the South. Walter was always pushed by his parents to attend a historically Black college or university; attending an HBCU had long been a rich tradition in his family. According to Walter:

...attending an HBCU was always stressed in my family, you basically had no option. I remember growing up going back with my parents to their college homecomings and loving listening to the Black college band and watching my parents interact with the people they went to school with. I loved seeing how everyone got along; it was one big family celebration. I could not wait to be a part of that type of environment.

Walter developed a love for science and math early on because of the influence of his dad and his older brother. Although Walter was not in a formal mentoring program before attending college, he always looked at his dad and brother as his role models. He indicated that he admired both of them, and he was proud of their achievements. Walter went on to attend an HBCU in the South but later transferred to South University. As such, Walter was able to provide a unique perspective as it relates to the experiences at an HBCU vs. his experiences at a Predominately White Institution (PWI).

Hayton Jackson

Hayton grew up in the South. He describes this neighborhood as the “projects”. He was raised by his mother, although he did indicate that he had spent some time with his father. Hayton’s father was incarcerated when he was young, and he was in and out of prison during most of his childhood. His mother did not attend college, and he is the oldest of his siblings. Hayton described his neighborhood as a “...crime and drug-ridden

ghetto”, and he indicated that early on he became a product of his environment; he sold drugs and followed in his father’s footsteps at one point in life. He is a first generation college student.

Hayton spoke candidly about feeling neglected by his mother when he was growing up as a kid. He indicated that he often felt that his mom showed favoritism to his other siblings. As a result, he attributes that neglect as the reason he would always act out and do things to defy his mother’s rules and regulations. Hayton describes himself as an “angry person” during his early years. He indicated in addition to selling drugs, he would get into fights and engaged in many inappropriate behaviors.

Regardless of the trouble, Hayton got in at an early age, he indicated that his grades in school never suffered. He stated that he always believed in doing his very best in school, and he maintained a 4.0 GPA in high school. According to Hayton, making good grades was a way to guarantee that he had an escape from the projects. Since he grew up in a predominately Black neighborhood and attended a predominately Black high school, Hayton told me that he was always attracted to White people. Hayton went on to explain what he meant:

....in my opinion, White means better...the White people have better schools and they are better prepared academically...I have grown up around Black people all my life and I’m tired of seeing poverty, and I’m tired of being poor...I want to attend a big White university as a way to escape from the Black world....

Keith Howard

Keith is from South Georgia. He was raised by his mother. Although his mother and father were never married, his dad lived in the same town. His father was never around, but he did indicate that he had a good relationship with his mother while growing

up in Georgia. Academically speaking, Keith described himself as an average student. He went on to say that his grades were usually in the “C or B” range. Keith shared with me that he was not motivated in elementary or high school. Moreover, he indicated that he always felt as if his teacher and the administration did not care about him or his abilities.

Keith described his hometown as a “country-southern town” where everyone knew each other. He said there was very little to do outside of school, so he would usually stay preoccupied with spending time with his girlfriend or traveling with his high school band. He looked to his uncle as a mentor or source of support during his childhood. He stated that his uncle was the only person who understood him and he indicated that he was comfortable talking to his uncle, especially when it came to topics like sex and relationships. Here is what Keith shared with me about his uncle:

...he gave me as much as he could. He was an entrepreneur and gave me as much as he could. He did not have a college education, but he sold insurance and was successful in his business. It was kind of taboo or maybe standard at the time considering his age and he sold insurance...he was great at it...it was sales and he tried to get me into it...he tried to take me under his wings, mentor me and support me.....it was more informal...but he really helped me navigate through a lot of situations and he was a great influence and helped me stay out of trouble on many occasions. I can think about a time when I was getting older and I had a girlfriend, and I was curious about having sex. I could not talk to my mother about my feelings or concerns, but I was able to talk to my uncle who educated me on the importance of having safe sex. Furthermore, he sat me down and explained to me in a way that wasn't embarrassing or confusing...he stressed the importance of abstinence. But he was also realistic, so he gave me advice just in case I decided to have sex anyway, which I did...Had it not been for my uncle, I know my girlfriend probably would have gotten pregnant. Thanks to my uncle we always used protection, and I have continued to protect myself by wearing a condom every time I engage in sexual activity, especially here in college.

Keith went on to share with me that he did not know much about South University before attending. He pointed out that one of the major factors that influenced his college choice

was his desire to get away from his hometown. Although he wanted to attend a college in another city/state, he did point out the fact that he wanted to be within a few hours of his mom in case there was ever a need for him to return home in case of an emergency.

John Daniels

Unlike the other nine participants, John was the only participant from the North. John was raised by his mother, and he is the oldest of his siblings. Like Hayton, John also grew up in the projects. He described his neighborhood a “dangerous and crime infested” place where he constantly lived in fear of not living long enough to be able to attend college. John played sports at an early age, and he was a member of his high school’s soccer team. John indicated that his high school was the only all Black high school in the city that actually had a soccer team.

According to John, his mother was very influential in his decision to attend college. He stated that his mom would always push him to do well in school and encouraged him to attend college as a way out of the projects. This is what John shared with me about his college decision-making process:

Neither of my parents graduated from college or attended college. My mother graduated from high school, my father didn't. My mother was always the one to stress academics to me in terms of that I need to go to college; I should go to college. I guess my biggest reason for wanting to go to college is to play sports. We never knew, "Oh I want to go to particular school and study this and major in this," never had that idea growing up. It was just always that I'd hear my mom say, "You need to go to college. What else would you do after high school?" Also, playing sports and going through that recruitment process... that they were recruiting athletics also made me more interested in college. It was like, "Oh I could go to college and play football or soccer..."

John stated that he was also fortunate enough to have a Black male mentor during high school. He said his mentor started out as his tutor and evolved into his mentor. John went

on to say that his mentor played a big role in his early development as a young man. According to John, his mentor exposed him to cultural events, helped him with his school work, taught him how to dress appropriately, and even showed him how to tie a tie. John went on to share how this relationship was his first exposure to an African American Fraternity. His mentor was a member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He stated that members of this fraternity took him under their wings and provided him an endless amount of guidance and support during high school. John goes on to attribute his relationship with the fraternity members as an instrumental part of the reason he was able to stay focused and attend college.

Isaac Brown

Isaac grew up in Columbia, South Carolina in a two parent household. Isaac described his household as one that embraced strong Christian values. Isaac's dad is an ordained minister, and he also works as an accountant. He is the younger of two siblings; his older sister is a graduate of the University of Georgia. Both of Isaac's parents are college graduates. His mom is a registered nurse. According to Isaac, his parents always stressed the importance of getting an education.

Isaac stated that his parents made sure he was exposed to a lot of things growing up. He played the cello and the piano. Isaac was also active in many extracurricular activities in school: student government, drama club, and the band. Academically speaking, Isaac was an honor student and a member of the Beta club at his high school. He stated, "My parents always had high expectation for me and my sister, so getting any grades lower than a B was totally and completely unacceptable." Isaac credits his dad for

his early interest in math and science. As a child, his dad stressed the importance of exploring STEM-related career options, so he thinks that is the reason why he developed an early interest in engineering.

Isaac said he was very fortunate to have several strong Black male role models in his life while growing up in Columbia. This is what he shared with me about his early influences,

I always had positive male influences around me...rather it be friends of my father...my father, older cousins or anything...or other males at church...there were always positive male Black male influences around me, especially my dad. I looked up to him because he was successful...he was just a great guy...he still is...he has this demeanor where everyone loves him....and as a kid, I always saw that...and that was something that I strived to be...and that I strive to have...and I feel that is something I'm growing into...so as a child I loved patterning myself after my father. He made me want to be successful and make him proud.

Isaac decided to attend South University because of the reputation of its engineering programs. He also stated that he wanted to get away from Columbia and attend a larger institution. Prior to attending South University, Isaac shared with me that he was also raised to get along with everyone, so he never saw color; furthermore, he felt as if everyone was treated equally. Most of his friends growing up were White, and he attended a predominately White elementary and high school.

Charles Robert

Charles hails from a small town called Sumter, South Carolina. He is the second child of four siblings; Charles has two brothers and a sister. He was raised by both of his parents, and he has strong admiration for both of them. He said of his parents, "My mom

and dad were always there for me and my sister and brothers; I love and admire them for all the sacrifices they made on our behalf.”

Like many of the other participants, Charles said attending college was a non-negotiable option in his household; both his mother and father graduated from college. His mom attended an HBCU, and his dad got his college degree in the military. According to Charles, my mom would always say to me that “college isn’t an if, it’s a when”, so we had no choice in the matter. Attending college was an expectation that was set in stone at an early age. Charles was one of the top high school football recruits in the state of South Carolina. Even though he always had a dedication to the game of football, he maintained a 4.0 GPA throughout high school.

In addition to crediting his mom and dad as early influences, Charles also participated in a short-lived mentoring program in high school. He stated that he was selected to participate in the program by his guidance counselor. The program prepared college-bound Black males with other Black male teachers in the school district. Charles described his relationship with his mentor:

Mr. Dinkins was always very supportive of everything I did. He gave me a lot of wisdom before I came to college. He stressed to me the importance of going to college, but he also gave me advice on how to balance football with getting my school work. Outside of my dad, Mr. Dinkins was one of the first Black males that I had ever looked up to; because I was someone who kind of thought I had it all together and didn’t need anyone to give me any advice. I appreciate him being there for me when I was in high school.

Alexander Jones

Alexander described his early years as a “traditional Southern upbringing” where he was raised by both of his parents. They both instilled in him the importance of an

education. Alexander is from Greenwood, South Carolina, and both of his parents grew up in the South. He described his community as “very close-knit” community where everyone knew one another. He grew up in a predominately Black neighborhood, and most of his friends he associated with growing up were Black.

His mom and dad both have their college degrees, and he is the oldest of five siblings. Alexander was a high school honor student, AP student, and he graduated at the top of his graduating class. He said, “I give all credit to my dad who made sure I was prepared for college and for exposing me to sports, science, and math.”

Alexander’s mentoring relationship actually started in high school. He indicated that he was working in a shoe store in the mall when he met Steven Jones, Jr, who has remained his mentor since they met in high school. This is what Alexander shared me regarding how the relationship was initially established:

We started working together at Footlocker and pretty much, you know conversations and getting to know one another. That’s kind of you know how it transpired. Then, we, you know, started just to hang out. He would come by the house and would play video games and things like that. You know the relationship was fostered through things like that. Over time, we talked more and I grew to trust him more and more. After a while, he became someone I could trust and he helped me get through a lot in high school, and in my personal life...he was someone I looked up to...

Thomas Martin

Thomas grew up in Gaffney, South Carolina. He was raised by his mother and grandmother. He is the older of two siblings; he has a younger brother who is currently a junior in high school. Thomas stated his family did not have much while he was growing up, but his mother and grandmother made sure they provided the essentials for him and his younger sibling. Thomas’s mother did not attend college, but she did graduate from

high school. Despite the fact that his mom only had a high school education, Thomas indicated that his mom always pushed him to strive for the best in school. Furthermore, he indicated that she always stressed the importance of going to college to him and his brother.

Thomas shared with me that he was always an honors student in school. He graduated with a 4.0 grade-point average; he was an AP student, and always did well in school. Thomas knew he wanted to go to college, but he stated he really did not know what school he wanted to attend. He applied to several universities in the Southeast but ended up attending South University after a campus visit. According to Thomas, South University felt like a very welcoming place. He went on to say that the faculty and staff in his department made him feel as if the university was the right place for him to go to college.

Thomas never had any early male influences in his life. He gave all credit to his mother and grandmother during our interview. He told me they both pushed him to do well in school, and they both encouraged him to attend college. Thomas shared the following with me concerning his mother and grandmother:

I didn't have a father growing up. I was raised by my mother in a single-parent household...when my mom was busy working, I would spend time with my grandmother...between the both of them me and my brother were always taken care of...they made sure we got our school work done, and they stayed on top of us to make sure we didn't get into any trouble. My mom worked a lot, but she always took the time to talk to me and to read to me when I was younger. She told me I was going to go to college and be successful. I owe my mom a lot for all the sacrifices she made to raise us...

Brock Lewis

Brock was the oldest of my ten participants; he was 27 at the time of our interview. He was one of two graduate students in this study. Brock received his BS degree from South University. He is currently a first-year doctoral student in a STEM related field. Brock grew up in the southern part of Mississippi. Brock described his household as pretty typical, with no strange or unusual dynamics. He was raised by both of his parents, and he is the younger of two siblings; Brock has an older brother.

Brock's mother and father graduated from college. His mother attended Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana, and his father is a graduate of Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Brock's mother is a school teacher, and his father is an Electrical engineer. Brock stated he was encouraged to attend an HBCU by both of his parents while he was growing up. According to Brock, "Both my parents attended HBCUs, and they expected me to do the same but I wanted a difference experience." Brock went on to tell me that he grew up in an all-Black community and his high school was predominately Black. Because of his lack of exposure to people of other races, he stated that prompted him to want to attend a predominately White university.

Similar to my other participants, Brock made excellent grades in high school and had a love for math and science. He graduated from high school with a 4.0 grade-point average. He was always an honor roll student, and he received several scholarships to attend college. Brock went on to talk about how he credits his brother as being his role model while growing up in Mississippi. Here is some of what he shared:

I looked to my older brother as a mentor prior to attending college. I guess me and him were really close...we talked all the time about all sorts of stuff, and he helped me out a lot with personal issues and relationship stuff. I got all my advice

from him, and he was very supportive growing up. He made sure I did all my school work, and I always looked to him as my role model so to speak...

Travis Taylor

Travis Taylor was my final interview. Travis grew up in Augusta Georgia. He was the oldest of three siblings; he has two younger sisters. Travis was raised by his mother. His mother worked in the hospitality industry as a housekeeper for a local hotel chain. Travis's mother did not graduate from high school; she quit school in the eighth grade because she became pregnant with Travis. Travis said he always admired his mother, and he has a deep appreciation for all she did to provide for him and his sisters.

Travis shared with me that his family was very poor growing up, and they lived in a very unsafe part of Augusta. He stated that his neighborhood was very violent, where he was constantly surrounded by gang violence and drug dealers. Despite his environment, Travis said that his mother always made sure he was safe, and always talked to him about the importance of getting an education. He described the role his mom played in his life:

My mom was always working, but even when she could not be home with us, she made sure one of the neighbors came over to check on us...if we didn't come straight home from school, Ms. Pitts next door would call her at her job and she would take off and come looking for us. We always had to do our homework as soon as we got home from school, and we could not go out to play until our homework was done...no matter how tired my mom was when she got home at night, she would go over our homework with us and she would make sure we got everything done. To this day, I admire her love and dedication to me and my sisters. I want to be successful because of her...

According to Travis, his mom was the reason he always did well in school. He graduated from high school with honors, where he finished at the top of his graduating class. Travis said he developed an early interest in reading and writing. He stated he

would write poems about the things he saw and experienced growing up in the ghetto. Furthermore, he indicated that getting his mother out of their old neighborhood is one of the things that motivated him to be successful in school. Travis went on to share that his mother was his only role model growing up, and he did not look at anyone else as a mentor or role model until the summer after he graduated from high school, when he met his current mentor in a summer camp.

Closing Thoughts Regarding the Participants

The data collection process was truly a rewarding experience. It afforded me an opportunity to delve into the lives of ten intelligent, young, African American males. Some of the participants were apprehensive to open up and tell their stories at first; but as the time went on during the interview, most of them opened up and let their guard down. In doing so, they were able to provide detail accounts of their experiences in a mentoring relationship.

Although there are many similarities in their background and experiences, each participant brought a unique perspective to the table in regards to the phenomenon of same race/gender mentoring. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing their stories. The data collected offered an opportunity to explore and understand the lived experiences of each participant interviewed for this study. As a result, structural elements emerged, and the next section will provide more information on those elements.

Section II: The Structural Elements

As illustrated in chapter three, structural elements are the summation of all the clusters previously identified during the data analysis process (Willig, 2001). In other

words, the structural elements capture all the clustered themes that make up each structural element. In the case of this study, seven structural elements or master themes were identified: the early years, perception meets reality; building bridges: the mentor; the storm; needs; benefits & outcomes; and significance. Table 4.a provides a summary table of all structural elements identified during the data analysis stage. This section will provide findings that make up each structural element, and each subordinate theme under each structural element will be discussed as well.

Table -4a
Structural Elements (Master Themes) - Summary Table

Master Theme: Early Years	Master Theme: Perception Meets Reality	Master Theme: Building Bridges	Master Theme: Needs	Master Theme: Benefits & Outcomes	Master Theme: Significance
Subordinate Themes:	Subordinate Themes:	Subordinate Themes:	Subordinate Themes:	Subordinate Themes:	Subordinate Themes:
1. Early Influences	1. Positive Perceptions	1. Rocky Start	1. Environmental Needs	1. Support & Guidance	1. The Value of Mentoring
2. Value of an education	2. Greatest Place on Earth	2. Finding Common Ground	2. Need for a Father Figure	2. Influence	2. Unique Experiences
3. Admiration for dad	3. Welcoming Environment	3. I Don't Need You	3. Need for Survival Skills	3. Academic Support	3. Situational
4. Environmental Influences	4. Other Expectations	4. Fraternal Bond	4. Need for Social Development	4. Fraternal Bond	4. Needs at a PWI
5. Need for a Father Figure	5. Racism	5. Expectations	Master Theme: The Storm	5. Resourceful	5. Needs in the South
6. Southern Upbringing	6. "White-Washed"		Subordinate Themes:	6. Professionalism	7. The White Mentor
7. Academic Excellence	7. No Expectations		1. Depression	8. Self-Actualization	9. Advice for Future Students
	8. Preconceived Notions Shattered		2. Betrayal	10. Gratitude & Gratification	11. Give Back
	9. Culture Shock		3. Coping	12. Academics	
	10. Lack of Support		4. Troubled Waters	13. Mentor to Brother	
	11. No Vested Interest		5. Struggles	14. Catalyst for Change	
	12. Campus Climate			15. Blueprint for Guidance	
	13. Feeling Invisible			16. Personal Growth	
				17. Expectations Met	
				18. "I See the Light"	

Early Years

The early years was the first structural element identified. In this study, I felt it was important to have an understanding of each participant's background in order to understand their evolutionary journey. So, my first set of questions delved into their background. During this process, I was able to get an understanding of their early influences, how they value education, their need for a father figure, and motivation to attend college.

Early Influences

Early influences were the first subordinate theme that emerged from most of the participants. All ten participants indicated that they were each influenced to some degree growing up. The influences that played the most significant role in the lives of these participants the most were their dad, a Southern upbringing, and environmental influences. Most of the early influences were discussed in the collective demographics section, so this section will focus on the significant data not discussed earlier.

Admiration for Dad. Of the ten participants, Walter, Hayton, and Isaac all gave illustrative examples of how they felt their dad was the most influential person in their lives when they were growing up at home. Although their families consisted of both parents, siblings, and other family members; each one indicated they had a strong admiration for their dad.

Walter described how he admired and he looked up to his dad when he was younger.

....my dad was an IT guy so; I kind of got the math from him. He pretty much taught me honesty, hard work, dedication, prayer, just doing what you got to do to survive and take care of yourself. He always stressed the importance of makings

good grades and getting an education...he always took me to science fairs and technology conferences...I admire him so much for all he did for me....

Walter also gave credit to his mother for pushing him to do well in school, but he credits his dad for his love of math and spending time with him the most as a kid.

Similarly, Isaac also revealed the role his dad played in his life when he was growing up as well.

...my dad pushed me to be really good in math and science. He always told me that stem related fields were the key being successful in life...he would always go out of his way to help me with my science projects. I remember admiring him because he would always take the time to push me and motivate me to do good in school and to be my very best...I want to be just like him when I have a family...

Isaac, like Walter, did acknowledge the role his mother played in his life growing up, but he stated his dad was the most influential person in his life as a child. Isaac also credits his cousin and sister for being role models in his life as well; they both went on to college to graduate as engineers. Isaac stated that this further motivated him to want to become an engineer.

Unlike Walter and Isaac, Hayton was raised in a single parent household, and neither of his parents attended college. Hayton shared with me that his dad was incarcerated during most of his childhood, but he always looked at him as one of his greatest influences. Hayton described how he looked up to his dad:

He was a pretty smart dude...he just made a bad decision...he put a lot of knowledge in me...all my life...so I mean...I kind of looked at him as someone I admired because no matter what wrongs he did to the world, he always told me to go to school and get an education.... Of the few times, I saw him as a kid; he would always come around and spend time with me. He would tell me to not follow in his footsteps....to make a better path for me and my siblings....

Hayton went on to share that he never felt accepted by his mother. However, he did give his mom credit for raising him and his siblings. The second theme that some of the participants identified as having an early influence of their lives were their Southern upbringing.

Southern Upbringing. Six of the ten participants said their Southern upbringing had an early influence on their lives growing up as kids. I had my own preconceived notions of what that actually meant, but Charles illustrated what it means to have a Southern upbringing in his interview.

.... I was born and raised in Sumter, South Carolina. My mother and father were originally from a smaller town up the road....I spent a lot of time with my family growing up in Sumter. A lot of my upbringing was done there, with my grandparents. I was raised by both my mom and my dad, and they both raised us with morals and values. We had a Southern upbringing; we went to church as a family and we were from a close-knit community where everyone knew one another...both of my parents attended college, and they both have master's degrees. Therefore, going to college wasn't optional; it was a must...

Charles indicated that growing up in the South gave him a deep appreciation for family, and he credits his parents and other family members for the positive influences they had over his life.

Like Charles, Brock and Travis both spoke about their southern upbringing as well and attributed that as one of the major influences on their lives. Brock, on one hand, grew up in Southern Louisiana. He was raised by both of his parents. According to Brock, "a Southern upbringing instills in you pride and strong family values." Brock went on to explain in more detail:

....it's something about growing up in the South, I think, that has made me the person that I am today. My parents are still together, and they were always there

for me and my brother growing up in Louisiana....they always made sure we did the right thing...and they took pride in their community...everyone at my church were like family...you don't see that up North...

Travis, on the other hand, grew up in Augusta, Georgia; in a community, unlike Brock and Charles. Travis described his neighborhood as the projects, but he still takes pride in the way he was raised. Travis talked about how members of his community watched out for one another. He attributes his close-knit community as one of the reasons he was able to make it to college. Travis disclosed that:

....my Southern upbringing is partly responsible for me making it to college....my mom wasn't always around, but her female friends in the projects always checked on me and made sure I stayed out of trouble....I knew if I did anything wrong in the neighborhood they would tell my mom, and I know I would pay for it when she got off work....

Travis's story was interesting. Despite the fact that he painted a negative picture of his neighborhood, he takes pride in being from the South. Furthermore, he had no problem being transparent about positives and negatives of his neighborhood.

Environmental. The environment was another influence that several participants indicated had an impact on them as a child. They deemed their environment as a major factor that influenced either their behavior or their motivation to go to college. Hayton, Keith, and John all described the environment they grew up in as unsafe, drug infested, and full of gang violence. They all deemed their neighborhood as one of the most important factors they used in deciding to go to college, make good grades, and strive for better opportunities in life.

Keith, for example, grew up in a small town in south Georgia. He said he knew at an early age that he had to get away from home. Keith indicated that most of his friends

turned to selling drugs or became affiliated with gangs while they were growing up in Georgia. Because of the influence of his uncle, he always tried to make sure he stayed on the right path. However, Keith went on to point out that he believed, had he stayed home, we would have ended up like most of his friends; dead or in jail. Keith spoke about the urgency to get out of his environment:

...I didn't come from the best of neighborhoods. There were a lot of negative influences in my town. A lot of my friends sold drugs and ended up going to the juvenile home before we even graduated from high school. A lot of them joined gangs in my neighborhood...and they went on to get into all sorts of trouble with the law. I wanted something better for myself, so I knew I had to get away and go to college...I was determined to not become a statistic...

Keith also shared how he did not feel challenged in high school, and he never felt as if any of his teachers cared about him. Because of this, Keith indicated that he had an urgent need to change environments.

Like Keith, John also indicated that he grew up in a very undesirable part of town. Similar to Travis, John labeled his community as the project. However, John grew up in the northeastern part of the United States. He was the only participant from outside of the South. John explained that he needed to be exposed to something different than what he was always accustomed too; he longed for a change of scenery. John explained the influence his environment had on his decision to leave home:

I wanted to step out of my comfort zone; I would say that definitely that I grew up in a majority Black community. I graduated from a hundred percent Black high school. I never had a white peer growing up. I knew white people from teachers, police officers, going to the Starbucks, seeing people passing but never had a relationship with a person who not the same race as me, honestly. I wanted to be around a different environment in terms of race, culture and just a demographic in

general. Plus, I was tired of all the violence in my neighborhood....I wanted to get away. That's why I chose to come to South University.

John indicated that very few of his friends graduated from high school. Moreover, he also stated very few of his friends in his neighborhood went on to college. John revealed that was he thankful he was able to be in a different environment, although he does miss his mother and siblings.

Value of an Education

The value of an education was another subordinate theme that emerged from the interviews. Several of the participants indicated that the importance of getting an education was something that was instilled in them from an early age. According to the participants, education was either encouraged at home by their parents, other family members, or through early mentoring relationships. According to Alexander, his dad made sure he recognized the importance of the value of an education. Alexander explained the role his dad played in making sure understand the important role education played in his life:

....my dad instilled the importance of education in me at a young age. Since the time that, you know elementary school....my dad really stayed on me about doing my homework and getting my assignments done. At such a young age, that when it came time for middle school and high school, I kind of took off on my own. So it all started with my dad. All the credit goes to him. You know what I'm saying? I wouldn't really be where I am academically if it wasn't for my father staying on me as much as he did, pretty much.

Alexander went on to reveal that his mentor from high school, who went on to become his current mentor, played a major role in making sure he did well in school also. He

stated that his mentor made sure he stayed focused and stayed on track with classwork and his homework.

Academic Excellence. Academic excellence was one of the attributes that eight out of the ten participants strived towards before coming to college. Almost every participant graduated from high school with a 4.0 grade-point average or above. Additionally, several of the participants excelled academically through avenues like the Beta club, advanced placement programs, or the honor roll. Thomas, like many of the other participants, shared with me how academic excellence was stressed in his household:

I had a good support system that believed in academic excellence...and my mother always encouraged me to do good in school, make good grades, and to go to college. I was an honor roll student. I graduated with a little bit over a 4.0. I was in honors, AP classes, and I did pretty well in high school. My mother always told me that I had to make good grades in school in order to be successful.

For Thomas, his mother and grandmother were more than just a source of support growing up; he described them as his “rock”.

Academic excellence for Hayton, on the other hand, came with a totally different perspective. Prior to the tenth grade, Hayton described his academic performance in school as less than average. He said he was only a C or D student because was distracted by all the bad elements in his neighborhood. Hayton when on to share his reasons for changing into an academic achiever:

...in 9th grade I didn't really care about school...I was out there in the streets doing bad things...I had a D and two C s my 9th-grade year...my gpa came down to about a 2 somethings...and then 10th grade is when the incident happened...It turned me around....once you go through a tragic situation, it makes you realize that you should take advantage of opportunities and do your best. Afterward, I

got all As from the 10th to the 12th grade....and ended up with a 4.0 when I graduated from high school.

From that point on, Hayton has called himself an overachiever because he feels as if he was given a second chance in life. Although he has had some problems navigating through life in general, his academic record has never suffered.

Need for a Father Figure

One of the most interesting subordinate themes that emerged from the interviews was the need for a father figure. Although most of the participants came from two parent households, Hayton, Keith, John, and Travis were all raised by their mothers, along with the help of other family members in some cases. Hayton and John grew up without a father because their dads were incarcerated. However, they both had relationships with their father between stints in prison. Travis, on the other hand, indicated that he had no relationship with his father, and Keith mentioned that his father lived in the same hometown, but he rarely came around.

During the interview, Hayton was asked if he had a mentor before attending college. Prior to that question, he had come across as someone with a really tough exterior, but this question made him pause and cogitate for a moment. When he finally answered, this is what he shared:

No, and actually I feel like I kind of lacked mentoring then because my dad went to the penitentiary then. He was not around much....sometimes I felt like I was growing up alone. I didn't really have anyone, you know?...so it was kind of like, no one was there for me...I think I really needed a father figure, but instead, I mimicked all the bad behavior that I saw around me...

Hayton went on to indicate that he believed the absence of his father contributed to him becoming a victim of his surroundings. Had his dad been present, he does not think he would have gone down the wrong path at one point.

Similar to Hayton, John grew up in a similar environment. His dad was incarcerated during most of his childhood as well. John described what it was like growing up without a father:

...I had my mother growing up, but my dad was never there full time...when he was in jail, I always thought I was missing out on spending time with him. Sometimes I felt like I was alone until I met Mark. Mark almost became like my substitute father. He was there for me, and he taught me how to be a man.

John went on to share that Mark was his first exposure to a mentoring relationship. He ended up spending a lot of time with Mark and his fraternity brothers during the latter years of high school. John advised that Mark was instrumental in teaching him some valuable skills that helped him evolve into a young man. Had it not been for Mark, John shared that he probably would not have made it to college.

The impact that growing up without a father had on these four participants will be explored further in this research study.

Perception Meets Reality

The second structural element that emerged from the data was called perception meets reality. This section will explore the perceptions that were held by some of the participants about attending a Predominately White Institution. Based on the data collected, some perceptions were based on preconceived notions but others were formed because of campus visits. Once the participants arrived on campus, some of their earlier perceptions changed because they were no longer in their hometowns; they were students

faced with the reality of navigating through campus life. The following subordinate themes emerged from the interviews: positive perceptions, other expectations, no expectations, and preconceived notions shattered.

Positive Perceptions

Four of the ten participants indicated that they had positive perceptions of South University before attending. These earlier perceptions were based on campus visits, motivation from their parents, or their love for the football team. Two of the participants met with faculty and staff in the departments of their intended major. Based on those interactions, they were even more excited to attend the university.

Greatest Place on Earth. Three of the four thought South University was the “greatest place on earth”, and could not wait to attend the university. Charles was the only participant who was motivated to attend South University because he wanted to play on the football team. Prior to being recruited, he indicated that he had previously attended several football games. Charles explained the impact that one of his campus visits played in his decision-making process:

I was looking for schools out of high school that would allow me to play football as well as a school that wasn't in necessarily a big town. A college town, a town that was dedicated to the students, I wanted a family atmosphere. I ended up at South University...it was my last visit before spring break that year. I came, we did the academic tour. A lot of colleges, to me, they looked alike. I wasn't a particularly picky kind of person, like "It has got to have this, it has got to have that." It had some good Residence halls and everyone on campus was nice, I was like "Okay, this is a really great place." I went to visit with the athletic department; they actually gave me a chance. They talked with me, coaches sat down for like two hours. They explained everything and at the end of it, they were like "Are you ready?" I ended up at South University because I was able. They knew I could get a good education; I had my major picked out with them and it worked out for me to play sport too.

Charles went on to share that he had a firm understanding that he was attending a PWI, so he knew the realities of attending the institution. His older brother attended a private PWI in the South, so he stated that his brother had previously shared stories about being Black on a predominately White campus. Like Charles, Alexander had visited the campus several times before deciding to attend. Furthermore, both his mother and father wanted him to attend South University as well. Similarly, Alexander shared how his perception was formed:

I thought South University was the greatest place on earth. You know what I'm saying? That probably stemmed from just a young high schooler just wanting to attend college, but you know I attended sporting events like football games and just hanging around individuals that are older than I, like my pops who wanted me to go to school here. I just really thought South University was just the greatest place on earth. I couldn't wait to get here. It just seemed so cool just to be in college and that's what I thought before I got here.

Isaac also described his early perceptions of South University as the greatest place on earth. In addition to being pushed to attend South University by his parents, he indicated that his perceptions were also formed because of the reputation of the engineering school.

Isaac shared the following:

I chose South University because it was the best engineering school in SC...plus my dad wanted me to attend...all the top students in my high school wanted to attend South University too...and the school was pushed on me by my guidance counselor, so I assumed it was the greatest place on earth since it was so highly recommended to me by everybody.

Welcoming Environment. Like Charles and Alexander, Thomas also visited the campus prior to attending. Based on his campus visit, he formed the perception that the environment was very welcoming. While on campus, Thomas spent a lot of time with members of his academic department that housed his major. According to Thomas:

...when we visited, it seemed like a nice place. The environment was very welcoming. The orientation ambassadors were very welcoming and seem to know a lot of information. My mom and I actually met people from my department; we talked to them, and got a lot of information. They made us feel like this was the right place for me...and I was picking the right major. The campus is very nice. The dinner hall room seemed pretty good the first time I came and visited. I didn't really see a lot of minority students, but my high school was basically half and half. I was okay with it.

In addition to the campus visit, Thomas went on to share that his mother played a major role in his perception of South University before attending. He stated, “she wanted me to attend the best university in the state”, so he indicated that concept was constantly reinforced by his mother.

Other Expectations

Unlike the previously mentioned four, five of the participants had other expectations of South University that were formed prior to attending. Their early perceptions varied, and they were usually based off of what they saw in the media, heard from members of their community, or preconceived notions based on South University's location in the South.

Racism. Walter, Hayton, and Travis expressed concerns about racism during their interviews. Walter was the only participant who transferred to South University from a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), so he stated that most of his perceptions of South University were formed by faculty, staff, and students at his previous university.

...I really didn't know what to expect before I transferred to South University. All I kept hearing was how racist the campus was...and my frat brothers not understanding why I wanted to transfer...even though some of my professors encouraged me to transfer because of the engineering programs, they also tried to prepare me for the racism that exists there...

Similar to Walter, Hayton reflected on why he had concerns about racism on campus as well. He shared the following:

You never really know too much besides what people say...or what you see on TV...the fact that it was racism around here...that's pretty much all I knew...so I kind of expected that before I came...but it wasn't like it affected me...I was just told to be aware...my father even told me that also...but it was kind of my perception...

Hayton looked at racism as an expected norm at South University. He stated he was used to being judged and discriminated against by other people, but racist behavior had not impacted him as a person. Hayton saw racism as a normal behavior, and it was a constant motivator for him to be successful.

“White-washed”. Hayton and John went on to describe South University as a place full of “white-washed Black folks.” I probed to get an understanding of what each one of them meant by that phrase. According to Keith:

...based on what I've heard about the school, I knew it was full of Black folks who are White-washed confused...whenever I met anyone that went there, they acted really funny acting; like they thought they were better than me...I was already prepared to deal with folks like that.

Travis shared his rationale for labeling students as “White-washed” as well.

...I'm from the hood, and I know what it means to be Black, but I knew those Black students up there were lost and confused...we had some Black teachers at my high school who graduated from South University; they were all proper and thought they were better than us...I don't understand how someone can be so White-washed and clueless...

Travis was very blunt about his early perceptions of the students attending South University; almost to the point of being angry. He went on to say that he would never change. In his own words: “I'm going to stay Black.”

No Expectations. Brock was the only participant who indicated that he did not have any early expectations of South University. Coming from Louisiana, he admitted he did not know much about the university except its academic reputation and the football team. He shared the following:

I didn't know much about South University prior to attending other than it was a good school...tier 1 research school with a low acceptance rate. I knew it was a good school, and I knew about the football team...but I didn't know much else prior to attending college. I came with an open mind, I didn't have any expectations.

Preconceived Notions Shattered

Although Brock was the exception, all of the other participants had various perceptions of South University; some positive and some not so positive. As each participant arrived on campus, the reality of attending a large PWI became apparent for several of the participants. Nine out of the ten participants revealed during their interviews the many challenges they faced navigating through campus life. Several of the participant's shared stories about the negative experiences they encountered on campus. They also reflected on the early realities of attending a PWI. Charles was the only participant who indicated he did not have any challenges early on. He credits that to being a football player. He went on to state that football players are usually isolated from the "normal" campus population, so he was pretty transparent about some of the preferential treatment he received as a student.

Nevertheless, the reality of attending a PWI was a major topic of discussion during the interviews. The participants shared their stories as they related to dealing and coping with college life. Their experiences varied, but overall most of the participants

explained how college life was nothing like what they envisioned. Several subordinate themes emerged during the interviews that focused this reality. The most prevalent ones will be discussed.

Not High School

Keith and John both indicated that they had to quickly realize they were no longer in high school. According to John, he quickly learned he was no longer attending an all-Black high school. John went on to explain that he could get away with a lot of things in high school, but he was being held more accountable in college. He had long desired to attend a majority White institution, but he was starting to second guess his choice:

....I looked around, and I realized I didn't see that many Black folks, especially since I was used to seeing people that looked like me...people that I felt comfortable with...even my soccer team back home was all Black...but here I was feeling alone; I was like, "did I make the right decision choosing to come to this school"...this place was nothing like my high school, and I missed that....

Even though John was from the North, Keith, who was from the South, shared similar concerns. Keith shared that he never felt challenged in high school, so he only did enough to make decent grades. However, he stated that he found the coursework at South University very challenging, and he was not prepared for that. He quickly realized that doing the bare minimum in class was not enough. Keith described this realization during his interview:

I just didn't feel coming out of high school that I was prepared for college...so the lack of preparation was a factor. Plus, I never really had to work very hard because they never challenged me in high school...but when I got here, it was a different story. The class work was hard, and there were so many assignments...I remember thinking "this isn't high school", they didn't prepare me for this....so early on, I contemplated going back home because I was scared I wasn't going to make it....

Keith advised that he wished he had taken high school more seriously, but he also blamed his teachers and administrators for their lack of interest in his academic success.

Culture Shock

The realization of the differences between high school and college were not the only reality the participants indicated they had to come to terms with on campus. Four out of ten of them talked about feeling culture shocked when they arrived on campus. Walter, for example, transferred from an HBCU. Based on our interview, the transition to a PWI was probably the biggest culture shock for him according to the stories he shared during his interview:

...this place was a complete culture shock; people cared about me at {school name intentionally admitted}. People actually talked to each other...when you see another Black person on campus, we spoke to each other; we didn't walk by and look the other way or not say anything...my professors made sure I had a job, made sure I attended conferences, made sure I applied for a UNCF scholarship, made sure I attended the conferences and what-not. I did a lot of research with them and they made sure I got exposed a lot of things...you don't see any of that here.

Travis echoed some of the same feelings shared by Walter. Travis came to South University straight from high school. South University was a complete deviation from the norm because he grew up in the projects and he was raised in a majority Black neighborhood. Although he thought was prepared for the transition to South University, he admitted he was surprised by what he saw.

...I knew this place wasn't going to be anything like the hood. After growing up around Black people, I wanted to be around White people really bad; I wanted something different...but I was like "wow" is this place real? ...the White people I was excited to be around sure wasn't excited to be around me...it was a

complete culture shock...I called my mother and told her I wanted to come home....

Like Walter and Travis, Alexander and Brock had similar stories about being culture shocked. Each one indicated that they questioned their decision to remain.

Lack of Support/No Vested Interest

Lack of support/no vested interest was another subordinate theme that emerged from the reality of attending college. Six of the ten participants made reference to this issue in their interviews. Brock was pretty vocal during his interview regarding his struggles he faced with professors whom he thought did not really care about him.

According to Brock:

...I went from a predominately Black high school and I was used to African American men wanting to take you under their shoulder and give you advice. But when I got here, all my professors were White or foreign males...and all they did was teach...there was no conversation and none of them were receptive to talking to me or getting to know me. Most of the time I would try to speak to them, they would look the other way. Or act like they never seen me before.... like I said...they'll look the other way...and when you go to their office they are straight to the point, cold, and not interested in taking the time to talk to you about anything other than class work if that....

Brock stated he had a hard time adjusting to feeling shunned by his professors. Thomas also had similar experiences. During his interview, he talked about South University not being the place that he visited prior to attending. Although he attributed his shyness as a part of the culprit to justify his early experiences on campus, he also felt like he was not being supported by his professors, nor did he feel anyone cared. Thomas described his feelings by stating:

I was always made to feel like I was being ignored in class. No one really paid any attention to me, and the professors never called on me during class discussions...when it came to group assignments, the White students made me

feel left out; I was always the last to be picked to be in their group...they just don't understand what it feels like to be a minority on a campus like this one....

Alexander, like Thomas, was equally over excited to attend South University early on, but also had to face a different reality after arriving on campus. According to Alexander:

I battled with not feeling supported when I got here, and I was like, "Wow, well it's not really everything that I thought it was going to be." You know, maybe I just came on a great weekend of high school or a great game, but when I got here I was like wow, this is different. I didn't feel like these people cared about me....I just don't know, but I was shocked at what I saw here...

Alexander shared that during these times he was grateful for the mentoring relationship that he had previously established in high school. He stated that he would constantly reach out to his mentor for advice and support. According to Alexander, "Steve got me through some rough patches, and I'm glad he was there to talk to over the phone; he even had to come and visit me on several occasions."

Campus Climate

The campus climate was another reality that some of the participants had to deal with after arriving on campus. Walter, Alexander, Brock, and Travis all made reference to the climate at South University as an avenue of concern after arriving on campus. Walter frequently compared the campus climate to the climate he was accustomed to at the HBCU he had transferred from. Walter stated that "the campus climate was extremely cold, and I didn't feel very welcomed" by other students. Alexander and Brock shared similar views on the campus; they both used the word "cold" to describe the vibe or feeling they go while walking through campus early on.

Travis, on the other hand, was a little more profound in the way he described the campus climate after his arrival.

...I mean do these people think I'm going to rob them or something? I could not believe the number of stares I was getting from White people...I mean I know I'm not some preppy type dude they might be used to here, but that didn't give them the right to make me feel like I don't belong...I had every right to be here just like they did; my GPA was above a 4.0 and my test scores were top notch too...the stares use to really piss me off to the point where I sometimes I felt like I wanted to snap on someone, but I didn't...thank God...

Travis indicated that he had to learn to channel his anger and not allow himself to become upset over the way he was initially feeling about South University.

Feeling Invisible/Isolated

Feelings of isolation and invisibility were the last subordinate theme that emerged from the data collected from the participants. In most cases, findings to illustrate these feelings have already been previously illustrated, but it is important to note that the majority of the participants accounted for instances when they felt either invisible or isolated. As a whole, all ten participants came to South University with the awareness that they were attending a large predominately White institution, so the campus population and lack of minorities did not come as a shock to the participants.

Their struggles came as a result of the realities they were presented with; most were in contradiction to their early perceptions and expectations. The next structural element will delve into each participant's current mentoring relationship. Based on the data collected, the finding will be presented that show the role these mentoring relationships had in helping these students navigate through some of the challenges they encountered on campus.

Building Bridges: The Mentors

The third structural element that developed from the data analysis was the process each participant went through to build bridges with their mentor. This section will focus on how the participants came about establishing a relationship with their current mentors. Based on the data collected during the interviews, I was afforded an opportunity to learn how each relationship developed, along with some of the hurdles and challenges the participants encountered with their mentors along the way. Three subordinate themes emerged: a rocky start, finding common ground, and expectations. Each one will be discussed.

Eight out of the ten participants met their current mentors on campus. Thomas and Isaac both met their mentors through a campus-based peer mentoring program. Isaac stated that his mentor reached out to him on Facebook several weeks prior to arriving on campus. Isaac's peer mentor, at the time, was an African American male student at South University. They both shared the same major. At the time of their introduction, his mentor was in his last year of study. Thomas, on the other hand, was assigned a female mentor who he also stated shared the same major. However, he ended up developing a mentoring relationship with one of the male advisors to the peer mentoring program. At the time of introduction, his mentor was a first-year graduate student at South University.

Additionally, Charles, Keith, and John met their eventual mentors by happenstance. Since Charles was a member of the football team, each team member was preassigned a mentor. According to Charles, he thought this person was only doing their job, so he never envisioned the relationship turning into a true mentoring relationship.

Similarly, Keith's current mentor started out as his academic advisor. Keith shared with me that every student in his department was assigned an academic advisor, so his initial meeting with his advisor was his first introduction to his current mentor. Similarly, John revealed that he was introduced to his current mentor through one of the Black male initiatives on campus. His current mentor worked with the program, so he encountered him on a regular basis.

Brock, Walter, and Hayton's first introduction to their eventual mentors were less deliberate. Brock shared that he was interested in becoming affiliated with one of the historically Black fraternities on campus. So, he reached out to a professor on campus who was a member of that organization; their first introduction was over lunch. Similarly, Walter was already a member of one of the historically Black fraternities on campus, so he shared with me that two of his fraternity brothers reached out to him after he transferred to check on his transition to South University. According to Walter, they both went on to become his mentor. But in Hayton's case, his current mentor started out as his roommate. Like Isaac, his mentor was also in his last year of study at South University. Hayton admitted that he could not get along with his roommate, at first, so he never thought he would have ever looked to him as a mentor.

Finally, Alexander and Travis shared that they both met their mentors before coming to South University. Alexander's mentoring relationship started when he was in high school. He and his current mentor worked together at a local shoe store. During their first introduction, his mentor was a senior in high school, and Alexander was only a sophomore. Similarly, Travis also shared that he met his current mentor while attending a

summer camp before his freshmen year of college. According to Travis, his mentor was one of the camp counselors. At the time of their introduction, his mentor was a senior at Morehouse College, an HBCU in Atlanta, Georgia.

Rocky Start

Although each mentee in this study identified one of more African American males as their mentors during each interview, the journey to get to this place had its challenges. Several of the relationships started off pretty rocky according to the participants. Probably the rockiest start occurred between Hayton and his mentee. Hayton shared the following:

...at first we didn't like each other at all...I'm thinking it was because maybe we were just alike....me and him...when we see any type of disrespect...or anything like...somebody doing certain things...we react violently...or stuff of that nature.....At first, I was going to fight him...but over time we talked more...I learned stuff about him...I learned the internal things about him...and he learned things about me....at first, I was kind of ignorant in the stuff I was saying to him...and then we found our commonality...we started playing chest together...reading books together...now he's like my best friend...

Hayton went on to share that they would always argue and disagree on everything during the onset of their relationship. Eventually, they landed at a better place. Like Hayton, John also shared with me that he would always “bump heads“ with his mentor in the early stages of their relationship as well. He shared his thoughts on the topic:

Like any relationship, it doesn't always start off great. It started off definitely bumping heads with [Wilbert]. We didn't agree on a lot. I had my own perspectives, he had his. Over time, we have developed a great relationship. I have such a high regard for him as a person, not only as my mentor but just as a human being. I really learned a lot from [Wilbert] in terms of coming into manhood, academics, and how college works out...how college is supposed to work ... In college, I really learned a lot from him in terms of how to conduct myself on a professional level in terms of dealing with professors, applying for jobs, resumes, and things like that....

John, like Hayton, both have a high regard for their mentor today, but they both admitted it took some time to get to that point. Travis also shared some similar challenges with his mentor after they initially met. According to Travis:

...I mean I was away from home for like the first time, so I wanted to have fun but he was always riding me...trying to tell me what to do and what not...I know I was getting into trouble more than my fair share but so were other people. It almost felt that this dude was out to get me...I came close to "popping off" on him on many occasions...but looking back now, I'm glad he was hard on me because he saw something in me that I didn't even see at the time...he's like my big brother; he still gets on my nerve, but he has taught me so much.

Travis acknowledged that he was at a different place that summer. He was candid about his stage of development during that summer. He knew he had a lot to learn, and he thinks divine intervention was one of the reasons his mentor, Eric, came into this life that summer.

I Don't Need You/Guarded. Isaac and Charles shared similar stories about being very apprehensive about forming a relationship with their mentors. Charles stated that he did not see the value in having a mentor because, in his eyes, he had it all together; he had always done well academically so he did not understand why he was being assigned a mentor. Charles shared with me the following:

He taught me that everyone needs a mentor because I definitely went into it, thinking "I'll be good without a mentor. God damn I'm in trouble." He definitely taught me that everyone needs a mentor. I think there's that dynamic of me coming in, thinking that I really did not need it and him showing me that it's actually beneficial. That's how I ended up referring to him as my mentor. It's something that needed to be said.

Like Charles, Isaac arrived on campus with a self-described arrogance due to their academic accomplishments in high school. Although Isaac was assigned a peer mentor,

he shared during his interview that he thought of the relationship as one dimensional in the beginning.

...all I really needed him for was to connect me with other people on campus since I really didn't know many people. Otherwise, I didn't think I needed him for anything else. But it grew from a peer mentoring relationship to a friendship over time....since my major changed beginning sophomore year...he assisted me and gave me advice with that whole transition....he kind of became like an older brother... he was still there for things when I needed it...I joined the intramural basketball team with him...we would still hang out...so he became kind of like an older brother figure...we would have conversations about relationship issues...he was there to assist...really in just anything I needed, he was there for me.....overall...just, someone, I could look up too...or get help from if needed.

Finding Common Ground

A second subordinate theme that emerged from the data was finding common ground. The majority of the participants stated they had trouble developing relationships with their mentors in the early stages because they did not think they had anything in common. However, they all slowly realized they had more in common with their mentors than they initially indicated. Hayton credits his love for sports and physical training as the key elements that brought him closer to his mentor. He described how these two elements helped to strengthen their relationship.

He knew I was interested in trying out for the football team, so he told me little stuff to do to get bigger...man, it was crazy...but I was gaining a pound a day...no substances...and that was my biggest problem in high school....well from middle school to high school...I was a running back but I still weighted 150, but I was still getting 10 yards a carry....you know...so it didn't really affect me too much....but when I get here...I still weighed 150...but by the time tryouts came...I was weighing 175-180...so I gained 30 pounds...as far as that....that can't be described....he didn't have to lift weights with me....he didn't have to run with me...he did all those things and he still does.

So, the love of sports and working out served as a bridge for Hayton and his mentor. But for Alexander, he stated their common bond was their love for playing video games. For

Thomas, he stated his bond with his mentor grew stronger because they were both affiliated with several of the same organizations on campus. Thomas described some of the things they had in common:

...I started to see him a lot around campus...we were members of some of the same organizations around campus...from there we started hanging out more and then I realized we had a lot more in common...he started taking me to church with him and we talked a lot about everything under the sun...I really didn't think he was going to be so cool at first.

Fraternal Bond. The fraternal bond turned out to be the culprit that brought Walter, Brock, and Alexander closer to their mentors. As stated earlier, Walter pledged a fraternity prior to transferring to South University. Brock, on the other hand, reached out to his mentor to learn more about one of the fraternities on campus. He eventually became a member of that fraternity, and he credits that fraternal bond as one of the ingredients that made his relationship with his mentor more solid. Alexander, like Brock, was not a member of his mentor's fraternity when they first met; they both were in high school at the time. Eventually, they both became fraternity brothers during different stages of their relationship, and Alexander credits that fraternal bond as one of the major reasons they have remained close over the years. Alexander spoke about that fraternal bond during his interview:

...well now he is my frat brother. Back then I wasn't... you know he was a Que then after he went off to college...that was something that I wanted back then in high school as well. It's definitely grown a lot more since I became a brother of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Incorporated, and now we connect totally on a whole other level. Not only the level that, you know we were on before college and even early college, but even now. It's strengthened because we share another commonality.

Alexander was very enthusiastic when he talked about the role his fraternity played in strengthening this relationship with his mentor. Similar enthusiasm was displayed by Walter and Brock as well.

Expectations

The final subordinate theme that emerged from the building bridges master theme was expectations. In the case of some of the participants, their expectations were not clear because most of them did not look at their current mentor as an actual mentor from the beginning. As mentioned before, some of them only thought of their mentors as just a friend, advisor, or a casual acquaintance. Of those that had expectations, they only saw a minimum need or placed very little value on these relationships at the onset.

More insight into the evolution of these relationships will be revealed in the next in the next section. The participants went into more detail about some of their personal challenges on campus, they begin to more value in the relationships they had established with their mentors.

The Storm

The next structural or master theme that emerged from the data was the storm. The participants shared stories on navigating and persisting through campus life. Through their stories about their experiences, I was afforded an opportunity to hear about feelings of depression, betrayal, their need to cope, and some of their struggles navigating through what many of them called troubled-waters. This section will delve into those experiences and how many of them relied on their mentors to get them through the storm.

Depression

Five of the ten participants recalled instances of having to deal with depression on campus. Keith stated, "I felt alone and I was struggling in the department because there were so few students that looked like me or could relate to me." Feeling alone and struggling in school was not Keith's reason for being depressed. He also disclosed that his mother was having financial problems, so he thought he was going to have to drop out of school. Keith went on to share the following regarding his dilemma:

...there was a time last year when I was really going through a state of depression because I had some financial difficulties. My mom just didn't have the money. So I was trying to focus on grades...and I was really scared that I was going to have to drop out of school. I went to Dr. Bostic and explained that I was running into some financial difficulties because of tuition. It was really hard to go to him or anybody else about my financial problems. But I'm grateful for the bond that has been established over the years, so I went to Dr. Bostic to explain what was going on..... He was able to point me to a fellowship that I applied for and was awarded. Because of his guidance and dedication, I was able to stay in school and cover my tuition and pay for books thanks to the fellowship. Dr. Bostic was a savior...I am forever grateful for his help in getting me through that tough situation. He was also able to help me get my bill on hold, and my classes on hold until the funds came in to cover the rest of my tuition.

Keith went on to share that it took a while to get to the point of feeling comfortable with Dr. Bostic. He stated that he slowly let his guard down and started to Dr. Bostic more once he realized that he truly cared about his success, and he was not just doing his job as an advisor.

Brock shared that he experienced similar points of depression primarily because he also felt alone. He shared an instance of how his mentor helped him refocus his attention to combat the depression.

...I remember having problems coping with being a student here. I found myself being depressed on a regular basis. Dr. Wells made me realize that I should not focus on feeling isolated and alone...I should focus on striving towards accomplishing my goals. Sometimes it gets tough and you don't know if this

is something you really want to do...so going to him and getting advice and talking through situations has helped tremendously. He has helped me understand that I'm not the first one who has gone through this situation...he's been there and he made it...so he lets me know that I can too...and he encourages me to stay positive and keep pressing on to reach my goals.

Brock went on to say that Dr. Wells has helped him get through several episodes of depression since he has been a student at South University. Brock stated that Dr. Wells has "walked in his shoes" before, so he knew what it was like to be a Black man attending a predominately White institution. Walter, like Brock, also shared his experiences dealing with depression. He shared an experience he had with a professor that resulted in him having to go before the academic integrity board because he was accused of cheating on an exam. Walter described his experiences dealing with the academic charge:

...last semester, I was really depressed because I was accused of cheating on a test when I was the only student in the room taking the test. Of course, the professor had to go ahead and report it and I was like, you know, they can go ahead and take this route and get it over with. That's when I reached out to Joe and Jason about it. I get really frustrated really easily about stuff, especially when I'm accused of something I know I didn't do. Joe told me "Hey Walter, man, you've got to relax." Jason said the same thing. They took the time out to really help me get through the process; they helped me write my rebuttal letter and give me some advice about the process, "When you go into the room, make sure you are real patient. Don't let them see you getting real ticked off." Jason told me if they see that, they might go ahead and be like, "All right, you've got to be out for a whole semester, or you're out of school," Because of that advice, I was very patient. That's one of the things that they taught me: being patient is really key... You've got to really know yourself and how to deal with situations like that.

Walter was grateful that his mentors were able to get his through the academic integrity board unshaved; the charges were dropped.

Betrayal

Betrayal was another subordinate theme that emerged from the data analysis. Brock and Walter both previously mentioned feeling betrayed by their professors who accused him of cheating, and Keith stated he felt betrayed because he thought the university abandoned him when he was dealing with his financial challenges. Travis also shared an instance of feeling betrayed, but this time, the story revolves around some of his classmates, not his professor. Travis described an experience he had in one of his English classes.

I remember the professor split us up into groups of I don't remember, but I was the only Black person in my group...none of the other students seem to be interested in working with me, and I felt like I was always being ignored. We were all responsible for doing a class presentation on our project...we were all assigned parts to complete and we had to turn everything into Blackboard. On the day of our presentation, I was in an auto accident, so I could not make it to class, but they had my work and my part of the PowerPoint. I later found out I got an F on the project for not participating. I could not believe that crap, especially after the professor told me that my group said I didn't really help or do anything...the ole me was ready to confront each one of them; Thank God I called Eric before I reacted. He told me to calm down and gave me advice on how to handle the situation. Because of his advice, I was able to avoid a potential confrontation.

Travis went on to say that he had always been the type of person who reacted without factoring in the ramifications of his actions. Moreover, he went on to state that his actions are more deliberate since meeting his mentor. Before he reacts about anything, he has an internal talk with himself and weights the pros and cons of his actions. He credits his mentor for teaching him those skills.

Coping

Coping was another subordinate theme that emerged from the interviews. Seven of the mentees indicated at some point during their time on campus they had problems coping with campus related issues. Several were illustrated in the section above.

However, Thomas and Alexander shared additional stories where they illustrated how they coped with certain situations. For Charles, it was his struggles coping with the reality of giving up football due to an injury. Charles shared the process he went through in order to make that decision.

It was the winter after our bowl game one season. Over Christmas break, I had gotten injured. I showed back up the first day, I actually got injured the night before the morning of the first day of spring semester. I walked into the training room, had to do emergency surgery. I came back and now they're saying "You can't do anything for a month. You can't rehab or anything, we want you to be a student for a month and then come back. I went to my mentor to talk because injury itself jeopardized more than football. It was jeopardizing other parts of life. I was having a problem coping with the reality of not playing football. I went to him and was like "Should I be jeopardizing my future to play a game that may not get me to the NFL?" He sat down with me, talked about it and he was like "You don't need football. You got a lot of other things going for you. You can survive without football." He went on to say "The one thing I knew about you, from the time you got here, you were out here playing because you love the game. By all means, I would say to you, leave." That's probably what caught my attention the most. He was like "Leave, you don't need it." I'm like "You know you work for them? You work for the team, you guys supposed to tell me to play ... I'm a new player. His advice was very powerful because he put my needs before the needs of the team. I guess I ended up listening to him, but it took me a while to really hear what he was saying. I went "I don't want to stop playing." But I think that whole conversation and talking about the decision you're going to have to make, a grown man making an actual decision this time, which was probably the biggest piece of advice anyone had ever given me.

Charles was probably the most reluctant in this study when it came to the value he saw in a mentor. But he ended up stating that his mentor was very instrumental in helping in several decision-making processes he encountered during his undergraduate years at South University. He was able to navigate through his decision to discontinue playing football, which ultimately ended his chances of playing in the NFL, but he indicated he does not regret that decision. Moreover, it afforded him an opportunity to explore his true career aspirations.

Unlike Charles, Alexander's issues were different. He stated that he had problems coping with being at an "all White" institution that was nothing like the predominately Black high school he had grown accustomed to back home. Alexander was very vocal about his adjustment process at South University and how he relied on his mentor to help him cope with feeling depressed, alone, and isolated. During his interview, he shared with me that he longed to be around people that looked like him.

...he told me to stop crying [laughs]...but he was serious...that pushed me not only in life or you know what I'm saying socially but definitely academically. You know, would call me to check up on me a lot, pretty often ...but he always made sure he'd let me know that I have a really solid foundation so I can't let anything get in the way of me academically...he told me I still had to get things done...He told me that that was a part of the process, dealing with my low point here...It's just going to be a little bit easier to do what you have to do now so you can get what you want later. So, he stayed on me definitely. He's definitely helped me out a lot. He's even been here campus to come spend some time with me a little bit and the fellowship and things like that. So personally and academically...the list goes one...he definitely went above and beyond in making sure I've done what I'm supposed to do.

With his mentor's guidance, Alexander went on to become more sociable on campus and became more engaged with other students. He admitted, his circle is very small, but have a few friends has helped him cope with feeling alone. He stated he has learned to channel his energy and stay focused on graduating and going on to medical school.

Troubled Waters/Struggles

The final subordinate theme that emerged from the data analysis was troubled waters/struggles. Every participant in this study told stories about their experiences dealing with issues the labeled as going through troubled water some just struggles in general. As noted in previous sections, several of their stories have already been shared.

However, this section will highlight some of the experiences encountered by John Thomas.

John echoed several times during his interview that college life was a big adjustment compared to high school. He stated he had to learn that disciplinary standards in high school are totally different in college. John went on to share with me his experiences during a previous semester where he was suspended from the university.

John described that experience:

That was a tough time for me because I didn't know what to do. I was kind of unaware that cheating could get you suspended in college. In high school, you get suspended, but it was a one-day suspension, this was the whole semester I was like, "Wow, What do I do with my time?" My mentor really encouraged me during that time. He definitely gave me moral support and also by being a resource to help me find a different an alternative thing to do while I'm suspended that's going to better me... That was his man, "What can I do?" The suspension happened, there was no way of taking that back. I was going to be suspended but, "What can I do during the suspension that can make me a better person or make me just a better, yeah a better person?" One of the things he suggested was to maybe find a job substitute teaching. Since I was an education major. That could just provide more experience in my field as a teacher and also allowed me to make some money while there in suspension. I guess something that really spoke to me was my mentor really tried hard for me not go home to my old environment up north. He noticed my growth that I'd shown since I'd been here at South University and he didn't want me to, I guess you could say, relapse to my old ways or old habits from being in an environment that I'm comfortable in and that I'm used to. He wanted to see me continue to elevate myself and grow, not go back home and potentially get in trouble.

John went to share that his mentor was so determined to not allow him to go back home, that he offered his own home as a place for him to live during his suspension. John stated his mentor's actions "spoke volumes that he would offer his home to me in a time that I was down and I time that was wrong for getting suspended." John went on to say

that he was forever grateful for his mentor helping him through a really tough time by being supportive above and beyond the call of duty.

Like John, Thomas also found himself dealing with some potential academic issues. He indicated that his grades started to take a “nose dive” and he was starting to stress out about potentially falling below a 2.5 grade-point average. He turned to his mentor for support. Thomas shared with me how he was able to navigate through this issue.

My mentor made me realize that I was involved in way too many extracurricular activities on campus, to the point where my grades were starting to suffer. He advised me to take a step back from some of the things that I was doing and focus on school and to get my grades up. I took his advice and I've been less stressed since then. I let go of some of the organizations that I was involved in. He had a lot of experience advising students on campus, so he gave me pointers on studying and how to manage my time better. I'm doing a lot better now. My grades are back up, and my stress level is low.

Thomas was really stressed when his grades dropped because he had never fallen below a 4.0 grade-point average prior to coming to South University. He also shared that his relationship with his mentor had really helped him come out of his shell. Even though he eventually cut back on his campus activities, he credited his mentor with pushing him to become more involved on campus. He reminded me that when he arrived on campus, he was very shy, quiet, and reserved.

As illustrated in the stories the participants shared about their experiences navigating through life on campus, every single participant in this study had one of more experiences that lead to depression, struggles with coping, feeling betrayed, or just an array of issues in general. However, they each turned to their mentors as a source of strength and support to help them navigate through the issues they were confronted with

in their stories. The next structural theme that emerged from the data will focus on the needs that each participant identified as being essential to handle many of the issues they were faced with on campus.

Needs

The fourth structural element that emerged from the data analysis was called needs. Each participant's individual needs varied based on the data collected from each interview. The needs that were more prevalently expressed by the participants were: environmental (survival skills), social development, need to be challenged, and the need for a father figure.

Environmental/Survival Skills

Five of the ten participants mentioned environmental or survival skills as a need they desired from their mentor to help with navigating and persisting on campus. John mentioned survival as need he expected from his mentor because he felt this mentor had an advantage over him since his mentor was from the South. John stated he often would feel like an outsider at South University and the surrounding areas because the North was so different. John revealed his experiences trying to navigate through his new environment and develop his survival skills.

I need someone who's familiar with the South to help me navigate my way through the South and on campus...but when you're in college you're not always on campus... Sometimes you go to a gas station. Sometimes you go to a store and you hear certain lingo or things that you might not naturally pick up on if you're not from here that your mentor can make you aware of. Certain areas that you might say, "No, this area is known to be very racist." You wouldn't know that because you're not from the South, you're not from this area. Or what does it mean when you see a confederate flag on cars, hanging on people's windows? What does that mean? I didn't see too many confederate flags in the North. I

don't think I've ever seen one except a picture of one in a textbook but here in South Carolina, I've seen several on cars, windows, hanging in people's front yards. When you have a mentor, that's someone you feel comfortable with to ask questions. "What does that mean? Why do they have that there?" I think that is important to my survival, especially for someone who's not from the South, it's even more important.

According to John, his mentor was a valuable resource that helped him navigate through many of his environmental concerns.

Hayton shared that his need for survival centered on learning how to fit into the campus culture. In order to accomplish this goal, Hayton shared that his mentor taught him some very important skills that helped him assimilate to into the campus culture better.

...you know I'm from the projects and I use to be an angry person when I first got here...I didn't like the people here man...I didn't like the way they acted...I had a problem with them....but he just told me to look at it differently...He told me to just cause I was mad....so what...he had to tell me to calm down and let it go....Josh told me to let it go...and Xavier taught me how to deal with it...and how to navigate throughout those situations.....he taught me how to be cool, calm, and collect...how to talk to people, build relationships, go see my professors, and ignore racism...

Hayton overly emphasized the fact that he had problems adjusting to the environment on campus, but over time, with the guidance of his mentor, he was able to make improvements. Hayton cautioned giving too much credit to his mentor, instead, he preferred to call his mentors advice a "tip", but in the end, he did acknowledge he has learned to be more successful navigating through his environment and building relationships with others.

Thomas and Brock's needs focused more on surviving and navigating through an environment where many times they both felt alone and isolated. As highlighted earlier,

they both used their mentors as a resource to overcome those issues. Thomas's mentor encouraged him to get more involved in campus activities, and as a result, he slowly overcame his shyness and started to engage more with other students. Brock, on the other hand, took inspiration from his mentor who also attended a predominately White Institution. Brock's mentor reminded him that his struggles to fit into the campus environment were secondary to his need to graduate and be successful. Brock mentioned that he has to constantly remind himself to focus on his long term goals and not allow himself to become consumed with other worries and anxieties that come from being a student on campus.

Keith also struggled with fitting into the campus environment and shared with me during his interview that he was appalled at the number of students he encountered on a daily basis that would not speak to him or acknowledge his existence. Keith went on to state that instead of dwelling on a lot of the issues he was facing on campus his mentor helped him to redirect that energy.

He has taken me under his wings and has been a great crutch to help me navigate through a lot of the challenges I have faced here at South University. Dr. Bostic saw my struggles fitting in here at South University, so he started focusing more on preparing me for the real world. He told me I had more important things to be worried about...He always made sure he matched my career goals with my schedule and made sure that I'm getting the exposure and connections I need to be successful once I graduated. Dr. Bostic has gone as far as giving me his personal cell number and encourages me to call him whenever I have any issues, problems or concerns. He has been a great mentor over the last three years.

Keith went on to share that there is more of a social component to their relationship now, and he views Dr. Bostic as a friend, instead of a mentor. Furthermore, Keith revealed that Dr. Bostic has introduced him to a lot of people, on and off campus.

Need for a Father Figure

A need for a father figure was the next need that emerged from the data. The four participants that expressed a need for a father figure in their mentors were Keith, Travis, Hayton, and John. As mentioned in the demographic section, all four of participants were raised by their mothers. Unlike the other three, Travis had never met his father. Growing up, he only had his mother and members of his community to look too for guidance. As previously mentioned, Travis had a strong resistance to his mentor when they initially met. But the dynamics of the relationship have evolved over time, and he shared with me that he sees his mentor as a father figure.

...I mean he has gotten me through a lot of things. He's only four or five years older than me, but he's like the father I never had...he even comes to campus to visit me on the up and up. I've even gone to Atlanta to visit him because going to school in this place makes you want to get away sometimes...

I probed Travis to clarify what he meant by his need to get away sometimes and he shared the following:

...I enjoy spending time with Eric. He has exposed me to so much. I never knew what a museum was until he took me. He took me to some fancy places to eat too, and I have learned from just being in his presence. The time away from campus helps keep me sane and balanced in the head...

Travis went on to share that he never had an opportunity to experience having an older Black male in his life to spend time with and learn things from. He continued to remind me during his interview that he never had anyone to look up to as a father figure growing up; all of the people who looked out for his best interest were women.

Need for Social Development

Some of the participants indicated they had a need to improve their social skills during their interviews. Isaac stated that he did not know many people when he arrived on campus, and he did not know how to go about making friends. But he was able to overcome that obstacle due to his mentor. This is what he shared:

My social skills were lacking when I got to South University but...I would say I think I gained a good amount of friends later on...and I started building my own community based off everything my mentor taught me, especially with the people he connected me with...

Isaac stated that his mentor helped him a lot when it came to his social development. He credits that social component to his college like as one of the reasons he has been able to persist on campus.

Alexander also stated that his mentor played a major role in his ability to improve his social relationships on campus. Alexander indicated that he was always a sociable person in high school, but he had problems adjusting once he arrived on campus.

Alexander stated he mentor had fraternity brothers on campus, so during their visits, he would take him around and introduce to other students on campus. Like Isaac, Alexander also ended up becoming a member of one of the fraternities on campus. He stated that he had always secretly wanted to become a member of the same fraternity as his mentor. So, he credits his mentor for exposing him to the fraternity and connecting him with people on campus.

As demonstrated by the data collected from the participants, each one, at some point, acknowledged one or more needs that challenged them as a student on campus. Some of the participants indicated they needed survival skills to help them navigate through obstacles they faced dealing with their college environments. Others indicated

they needed a father figure because they grew up without the presence of a full-time dad, so they had a need for a substitute father or a role model. Finally, some of the participants indicated they had a need to develop their social skills because they were thrown into a new environment, and in some cases, felt lonely or longed for the companionship of friends to help them cope with the realities of college life. In each scenario, they all turned to their mentors as an agent to help them navigate beyond or manage the needs they identified.

Benefits & Outcomes

The fifth structural element or master themed that emerged from the data were benefits and outcomes. This theme emerged because during the interviews each participant shared the many ways they have been rewarded by involved in their mentoring relationships. Moreover, they also acknowledged how they have evolved as a result of their mentoring relationships as well. In this section will present findings surrounding three benefits and outcomes identified by the participants: support & guidance, catalyst for change, and gratitude & gratification. Although there were several parallels in their experiences, the findings will be highlighted in this section.

Support & Guidance

All ten participants acknowledged they looked to their mentors as a source of support or guidance to help them persist as a student at South University. Six of the ten participants stated they have benefited from their mentoring relationships because of the academic support they had received from their mentor. Brock shared a time when he was struggling with a research project that he was working on with one of his professors. He

indicated that he was assigned a research topic that he had no say in regarding the topic. Brock went on to share that he was not interested in the topic, so found it challenging to conduct research and write about “such a boring topic.” As a result, he turned to his mentor for support. Brock went on to share the following about that experience:

I was having a situation where my professor wanted me to work on a research project that I wasn't necessarily interested in....but that's I'm here on a fellowship so I know I have to maintain a certain grade-point average, so I couldn't say no to him...so I went to my mentor about the situation because I didn't want my grade to suffer in the class...I asked him how should I handle the situation? He gave me some advice and told me...there's always something interesting about research...so you have to dig deep and find something or some inspiration about that topic...you have to find something interesting about the topic that you are interested in...The topic may not interest you...but something in the top might...so try to find that interest and inspiration.

Based on his mentor's advice, Brock stated he was able to refocus and find a niche in the topic that interested him. He shared that he was able to complete the project successfully thanks to his mentor's guidance.

Similarly, Isaac shared a time when he was struggling in one of his engineering classes during his freshmen year where he had to turn to his mentor for support. According to Isaac, he felt overwhelmed by the class and he was uncertain if he could make it through the class without putting his grades in jeopardy. Moreover, he was also uncertain about his true passion and interest in engineering as a major.

I was in chemistry...physics, calculus, and I was in engineering classes and I wasn't loving it...I hated everything...I still remember walking across the bridge...calling my mom and telling her I didn't want to do this...I hated this.....I wanted to stay in school...but I didn't like engineering at all...she told me to “see it through...it's not over...it's not hard”...but I told my mentor also...his advice was the same....but me calling my mom...all they could do is give me moral support...but my mentor sat down with me...he helped me with my homework....he talked me through the situation....he helped me work on practice problems...he gave me physical support...he was always positive and

optimistic...I appreciated him...he was always there to help me with my problems or help me along the way....It was great to have someone who had been through the same struggles.

Isaac went on to share that he was able to persist that semester and maintained a good grade-point average. However, he stated that his mentor helped him to realize that engineering wasn't his "true calling" as a future career. Isaac changed to his major and he indicated he's happier now because of the change. He stated his mentor gave him the courage to realize he had to be empowered to live his life for him by not choosing a major that pleased only his parents; his satisfaction had to come first.

Like Isaac, Keith also reflected on some struggles he faced academically that led him to turn to his mentor for support on several different occasions. Keith explained the approach his mentor would always take when it came to supporting him and giving him guidance when it came to academic matters:

...he has given me great guidance. By meeting Dr. Bostic, he has taken me to the next stage of my life or juncture of my life. It isn't so much of a "do this" "do that"...but it's more of a discussion where we sit down and decide through dialogue "what is the best path for me" ...it's more of a discussion...taken from an adult whose been there and one adult who is trying to get there...I'll ask his opinion and the ultimate decision has been up to me...and I appreciate that. If we disagree, he gives me the pros and cons...and we have made the best decisions when it comes to life, class, personal issues, etc. He doesn't push, but might suggest a path that I might need later in life. I'm no longer "winging it" or making decisions fly by night...but I'm making informed decisions with my mentors support.

Keith went on to share that his mentor's support extend beyond academics, and he acknowledged that because of his mentor's influence, he has grown personally and feels more confident making decisions that have a positive impact on his life.

Unlike Keith, John admitted it took him a while to get to the point of seeing the value of his mentor because he acknowledged on several occasions during his interview that he was very “stubborn and hot-headed” when he got to South University, and he shared that he always thought he was right. Even though John was previously suspended for a semester for cheating in one of his classes, he admitted that he still refused to take ownership for the role he played in the suspension, to the point of not even caring out the ramifications for his actions. John stated that the “light didn’t finally go off” until after he moved in with his mentor during the semester of his suspension.

...suspension is not a good thing; it took me a while to see that...but after living with my mentor that semester, he made me slowly realize the importance of making good grades...he has definitely challenged me to pursue academic excellence, I would say. When I say, I mean ... Growing up I was an average student in terms of academics. Wilbert pushed me and challenged me in terms of thinking, "Why have I been average and kind of been settling?" I get what I get kind of attitude, versus he said, "No I can get all A's in college." Or in terms of putting my best foot forward in classes. Academically that's how he has been there in turns of me doing my best in class, not always find the easy way out, but take the hard professors. If you hear a particular professor is very difficult, take that professor, don't try to shy away and take the professor that doesn't make you write as many papers or have so many homework assignments. Take the ones that challenge you and make you a little bit more uncomfortable. At the end of the day, that's going to help me grow as a person and as a student.

John says he is no longer that average student that he was in high school. He went on to state that because of his mentor’s support and guidance, he now strives to do his very best academically; he credits his mentor for this change.

Travis and Thomas both shared instances where they relied on their mentor for academic support. As reported earlier in a previous section, Travis illustrated how his mentor gave him the tools he needed to overcome an issue that he had in one of his English classes that could have jeopardized his grade in that class. Travis explained how

his mentor gave him the necessary advice to navigate through the situation without impacting his grade in the class. Travis went on to acknowledge how grateful he was to his mentor for helping him be more responsible and professional in his decision-making process. Like Travis, Thomas also previously shared how his mentor helped him greatly improve his grades by giving him advice that allowed him to be more strategic in the way he studied and prioritized his classes. Thomas credits his mentor as the reason why his grade-point average has improved. He also credited his mentor for helping him with his social development skills as they related to his stepping out his comfort zone and networking and meeting other students on campus.

Influence. Influence was a subordinate theme that emerged under support and guidance. A few of the participants illustrated through their stories the many ways their mentors have had an influence on them since the formation of their mentoring relationships. Walter, for example, shared how his mentors, Jason & Joe, have influenced him to go on to pursue a doctorate degree after he graduates. He states:

...just being around and seeing them get their PhD's. It's like, man, I know these guys personally, to see them going through that struggle and process of interviews, research papers, and really saying, "I want to be like that one day." Not take the exact same path but, of course, I'm going to go for my PhD and be like, "You know what? Joe and Jason told me this is what it takes and I know I have the ability to do the same thing." Even when I do get to that point, I know I can always fall back on them and be like, "Hey man, what was that thing you did for your research paper? How can I do it a little better than what you did?" I know they will always be there to give me that extra support and help that I need.

Walter also shared with me that the most important influence his mentors have had on him is preparing him for the future. He explains:

...those guys have gone out their way to make sure I'm prepared for the future. I think by mimicking their behavior, it has really put me in a place at this time in

my life where I know what it takes to really be successful in any arena of academics. Whether is undergraduate, grad school, postdoc, whatever, you really have to put in that time, time management, and responsibility. They have shown me that I need to do whatever it takes to get a job done.

Walter went on to share that he has grown and developed professionally as a result of the influence of his mentors. Because of their influence, he indicated he's more focused and equipped with the tools necessary to make better decisions.

Similarly, Charles echoed some of the same sentiments about his mentor. Throughout his interview, Charles reminded me that he never needed his mentor for academic support because he always strived to do his best academically. But he does acknowledge the influence his mentor had on him in other areas that allowed him to focus and prioritize. According to Charles:

I never really felt, here at South University, that my academic program was hindered because of any external factors. It was all things that I had to get under control. That's what he helped me with. If I went to him, "I got this going on and this," he would be like "You're somebody who likes being busy, you would be hearing a lot of things, but you got to find out what's your passion, what drives you. All you got to do is focus. You don't have a problem with handling things; you've just got to be able to focus." It wasn't like I needed his help to feel comfortable; I went to him for the wisdom on how to handle the pressures of life. He definitely just kept me on track and made sure I was thinking the right things. That was what he did for me.

Charles went on to state that his mentor has influenced him to make decisions that are more aligned with "being a man." Charles stated, "I have learned a lot from all the advice he has given me about manhood, and I feel like I am making better decisions about my future because of my mentor."

Hayton talked about how his character has developed because of the influence of his mentor. Hayton's described this influence by stating the following:

...because at first, my goal was to be in business...I wanted to be a little more aggressive than the typical business man... You know...but with him...he kind of made me say...I can be aggressive... but move intelligently...be very intentional...always think a couple of moves ahead....I mean he got me back into reading...so that sums up everything...so now when I read...I don't just read novels...I read self-help books...and they help to develop my character...and that's going to be everlasting...I'm going to continue to read....and continue to develop my character because of him.

Hayton was very proud of the influence his mentor has had on his new found passion for reading, which he attributes to building his character. Hayton also went on to share that his mentor has influenced him to be more rational in his decisions making process.

Because of this, Hayton stated his decisions are more thoughtful and deliberate; they are no longer rash and based on reacting to anger.

Catalyst for Change

Catalyst for change was identified as another subordinate theme that emerged from the data analysis process. Every single participant shared the many ways they have evolved as a result of the influence of their mentor. According to the participants, change has come in many ways, but the primary ways discussed were personal growth, professionalism, and self-actualization.

Professionalism. John, Hayton, and Travis revealed during their interviews that their mentors were very instrumental in allowing them to see the important role that professionalism played in their daily lives. Each participant shared through their stories that they all grew up in neighborhoods they described as either “projects” or bad neighborhoods in general, and each one alluded to being products of their environments in one way or another. As a result, all three either mimicked the behavior of those around them or never had anyone to hold them accountable for their actions.

John shared with me a story where his mentor made him understand the importance of being more professional in the workplace. John had a dispute with his supervisor. His mentor made him realize his actions were the cause for the dispute. John explained how he learned from the incident:

...the situation was that I had missed work. I told my supervisor I had a legitimate excuse...he wrote me up for missing work. My thing was that I told him that I wasn't going to be there so I didn't understand why I needed to be reprimanded for not showing up when he knew that I wasn't going to be there. I did wait until last minute to tell him that I wasn't going to be there. Wilbert was like, "You know, you should have let him know ahead of time. When did this happen?" I was like, "It doesn't really matter when I let him know, the fact is that I told him and he knew that I wasn't going to be there." The day of is not that responsible or reasonable for your supervisor at that point was what Wilbert was trying to explain to me, but I really wasn't understanding it because, "Hey, I let him know." I told him the day and I thought it counts. But, my mentor told me that there's a way you conduct business in terms of giving someone a week notice if you know you have something coming up...not doing so leaves a bad impression of me...so my mentor taught me how to be more courteous and professional at my job, so that's what I took from the situation...

John went on to share that his internship that summer was his first job, so he had no prior experience regarding how he should have conducted himself as an employee. But he now admits his actions were very unprofessional he appreciated the lessons he learned from his mentor during the situation.

Hayton, like John, also admitted he was a little "rough around the edges" when he arrived on campus. As mentioned earlier, Hayton described himself as a very angry person with very little patience for tolerating other students on campus. Hayton stated that he "probably would not have changed had it not been for his mentor." Hayton went on to say that his mentor taught him how to be more "tolerant of people and how to calm

down and listen” to what other have to say even if his disagrees with their stance on an issue. Hayton when on to describe his change in more detail:

The way I look at stuff...even the way I talk now is different...I mean it's crazy how I use to be so rude to people...but Xavier has showed me how to think much more logically now and make better decisions in my life...I mean I have changed the way I dress to...I even wear shirts, suits, and ties because I see how it's ok to be professional even here on campus... it's crazy how I have changed...

As shared previously, Hayton acknowledged that he thinks his new found professional etiquette skills will have long term benefits has he moves closer to starting a career in the world of business. Similarly, Travis also described how he has changed due to the influence of his mentor.

...growing up I only saw what my environment showed me, I mean I only knew that it was cool to wear baggy pants and chase girls and wear by do-rag when I wasn't in school...but Eric showed me that I have to be more professional than that...when I got to Atlanta I eat with a salad fork and a different fork for my entrée, who does that...I mean I see how important it is now to conduct myself in a professional manner in certain environments; it's crazy all the fancy stuff this dude shows me...my mom even calls me fancy now when I go home because I have learned so much from him...

Travis shared that he looks forward to the time that he spends with his mentor, and he continues to enjoy being exposed to different people. He went on to state that his mentor he feels his mentor has equipped him with the skills that will allow him to interact with people from all backgrounds.

Self – Actualization. Self-actualization was another area where some of the participants saw a change in their overall development due to the influence of their mentors. Charles shared that his mentor has given him the confidence he needed to accomplish anything in life. According to Charles:

I think I changed a lot because of my mentor...I changed in that he helped me to grow up and to really begin to make decisions on my own and not wait for something to happen; Take charge. One of the things he always says is "Sometimes you just got to demand what you want and not take no for an answer." You have to be confident in the things that you've done. Not be cocky about it, but confident, know what you've done, know your ability, and know your strengths. Then you can walk into a room and be respected by your peers, whether they'd be your skin color or not. He gave me the tools to walk with confidence and know who I am and be more aware of myself, then execute what I needed to get done in order to get where I need to be.

Charles went on to state that his mentor has been very instrumental in making him see his potential in life after he moves on from South University. Alexander, like Charles, also shared how impactful this mentor has been on his overall personal development.

...I've changed quite a bit personally. Just because of some of the things that he shared with me; just some of the things that he knows and tells me not to do, this and that. Because of his guidance, it has allowed me to do a lot of self-reflecting on who I am... You know like, "I've been there." It kind of allowed me to dodge a few bullets that I didn't have to, you know what I'm saying, and even step in front of because somebody else told me not to go down that path. So, it kind of allowed me to mature more quickly mentally because I had somebody in my corner telling me, "I've already been there don't do it." Now, I make better decisions in my own life because of this...

Alexander went on to state that his mentor's influence has allowed him to change his whole "psyche" when it comes to making decisions. So he feels like he has been able to grow up a lot because of his mentor.

Personal Growth. Personal growth was another area where the majority of the participants illustrated they have changed or evolved for the better. Some areas of personal growth have been shared previously in their stories, but this section will highlight a few additional stories shared by the participants.

Thomas shared how his mentor has helped him to grow and developed personally.

I guess, just from having a mentor has contributed to my personal growth. He has helped me step out of my comfort zone and learn new things. He has also been that resource on campus by helping me be knowledgeable about different situations since I have been attending a PWI. He also attended a PWI for undergrad and grad school, so helping me through that, giving me advice on how to stay focused, and, essentially, getting to graduation are some of the ways he has helped me grow.

Thomas shared that his mentor has also made him more become more comfortable interacting with other students and faculty on campus. Moreover, he indicated that he has overcome his shyness and now he is more confident in his public speaking ability. Like Thomas, Walter indicated during his interview that he has grown in several areas, particularly when it came to his maturity level. Here is what he shared:

...coming here, it's more like a variety of things to get into; whether that's going to town and hang out with friends or meeting different girls here and there, I was just that guy that got into everything. Meeting my mentors, Joe & Jason, was like, "Hey Walter, man, you cannot be out here being a savage and what-not. You've got to really get your life on the right path, man. These girls are going to be here regardless." If I knew what I knew back then, I would probably still be a straight "A" student. Of course, you learn in life you've got to get out there and try different things out. Meeting them, it's helped me to mature a thousand times over. If not, I'd probably have been doing some same stupid stuff that I was doing when I first got into college.

Walter stated that looks up to both of his mentors because they have served as a great example for him to "mirror" himself after when it comes to his behavior on campus. He went to reveal that he is no longer consumed with chasing women, and he is more focused on raising his grade-point average in preparation for graduate school.

Similarly, Brock shared that his mentor has been a change agent for him as well. Brock stated that he has grown as a result of his mentoring relationship. He illustrated his point by stating the following:

You know I have been able to take on another perspective other than mine, and being able to trust someone has changed me...and now I want to do the same thing for someone else and become a mentor. Like I said, you never know what someone is going through and it may seem like everything is good...but there could be a lot going on and those things could be causing that person a lot of stress...so having a mentor is an important way to release the stress and the relationship can be a very therapeutic way to deal with the challenges of being at an institution like South University.

Brock went on to state that his relationship with his mentor has equipped him with the tools he needs to persist towards getting his PhD.

Gratitude & Gratification

Every participant, in one way or another, expressed their own personal gratitude and gratification for the role their mentors have played in their lives during their time at South University. Although original expectations varied initially, the participant spoke of the value these relationships have added to their lives and the discussed the impact each relationship has had on their ability to persist.

Fraternal Bond. Walter for example, indicated that he felt like he would not have been as successful at South University if it was not for the influence of his two mentors. He stated that Joe and Jason have helped him overcome several obstacles during his time at South University, and he went on to share how grateful he was to have them as mentors.

I'm thankful for my mentors because I wouldn't be as prepared and connected to other people that would help me get to where I want to go. Meeting them, my mentors is definitely a helping hand. If I didn't have them, I probably would be the same struggling student trying to figure out what I'm going to do in life, just going by not knowing what is going on in the outside world. They have really motivated me to change my behavior and continue pressing myself to reach the highest heights in life.

Walter credits the fraternal bond as another reason he was grateful to have Joe and Jason there to support him at South University as well.

Similarly, Brock echoed some of the same sentiments during his interview. As previously discussed, Brock reached to his mentor in the beginning only to explore his interest in one of the fraternal organizations on campus, but the relationship evolved into a mentoring relationships. Brock shared how thankful he was for his mentor.

When I reached out to him, I only expected to become a part of his organization...and that happened, but the plus was he not only became my frat brother but he became my mentor...that person you can talk to when you don't want to talk to your parents....someone you can go to, to confide in and know you can trust them and know they won't tell anyone else. Having someone to talk to ...cause here at South University this can be a lonely place and sometimes you can feel isolated in the population on campus...I needed up getting from him a person who put me in touch with other people to talk to and be sociable with...he gave me all the helped I needed...all these things turned out to be what I got from the mentoring relationship and I'm thankful for him helping me make it here.

Brock went on to state that the fraternal bond he shared with his mentor help to foster all the positive aspects of their relationship. Alexander also eventually became a member of one of the historically Black fraternities on campus, and like Brock, he also spoke about gratitude towards his mentor and the role their fraternal bond played in their relationship.

Steve and I went from being friends in high school to fraternity brothers...having that extra bond helped to make the relationships stronger. I'm thankful for pretty much just having somebody that I can confide in all the time; whether it be from the most minute issue to very serious ones. He got me through some rough times here at South University, especially feeling alone and when I was depressed about being here. So, just pretty much just having that person in your corner, that support system and making sure that you know, you're not alone in anything that you do.

Alexander stated on my occasions during his interview that he was thankful for the role that Steve played in his adjustment to South University. He went as far as saying that he

did not think he would have remained at South University had it not been for the support he got from his mentor.

I see the Light. As previously indicated, several of the participants acknowledged during their interviews that they feel as if they needed a mentor when they arrived on campus do to their stellar academic performance in the past. As a result, several of them were resistant to forming relationships with their mentors, but over a period of time, they eventually admitted to being grateful for the influence and support they received from their mentors.

A mentioned before, Isaac only saw his mentor as a person who could help him get connected to other people and resources on campus, which he acknowledged has helped did help him in that capacity. However, Isaac went on to admit that he was thankful for having his mentor in other ways as well.

I am thankful for the role my mentor has played in my life. I have become a much more confident person...to see how they have overcome their own obstacles in their lives....it's made me more courageous...made me want to find out the things I can better myself in. and do it....I've always heard a lot of people say a lot of things they want to do...but to actually see someone who looks like you do it...time after time after time....be consistent with those things...that along is very impactful to me...

Isaac was making reference to how inspired he was when he saw his mentor go through the challenge he endured while getting his PhD at South University and seeing him make the transition from graduate student to working professional. Like Isaac, Hayton was also resistant to forming a relationship with his mentor but shared that he is thankful for the impact that his mentor has had on his life as a student, and how the relationships has helped him to remain “sane” and balanced.

...I mean I am thankful that this dude has helped me not have a breakdown man...I witnessed someone having a breakdown because of stress, his girl, grades and stuff like that...for me...I don't want to be looked at like that...I don't want to go through that...so I feel like if I talk to this man...he can talk to me about that...and say, "it's not even that bad bro"...I mean be by my side and talk to me ...and be supportive...and help me get through it...sometimes that's what you need in a place like this.

Hayton also previously shared how grateful he was for the role his mentor played in encouraging him to read and aid in his overall physical development towards his goal of trying out for the football team again.

Charles and Travis both were also reluctant to forming relationships with their mentors in beginning of the relationship. Like Isaac and Hayton, they both had excellent academic records, so they failed to see the significance of these relationships. Travis went on to indicated that he was very thankful for having his mentor in his life. According to Travis, he is "grateful for the influence his mentor has had on his overall personal development as a man." Travis shared that he speaks in a more professional manner, has improved upon the way he dresses, and he is more strategic when it comes to his future goals and aspirations; he credits his mentor for all of the aforementioned improvements.

Likewise, Charles admitted during his interview that he is also grateful for the impact that his mentor has had on his life as well. As previously mentioned, he revealed that his mentor has given him the confidence to make more informed decisions in regard to navigating through campus and planning his future career goals. He also stated during his interview how overwhelmingly grateful he was to have his mentors guidance when he was faced with his football injury and his decision to discontinue playing football.

Significance

The significance of same race/gender mentoring was the sixth and final structural element that developed from the data analysis. During the interviews, the participants made several references to the role that a same race/gender mentoring relationship played in their lives; some saw the relationships as valuable and impactful, but some did not see the value for them personally. Rather, they acknowledged the value of mentoring, but some thought the mentor could be just as effective if he was White or of another race. In either scenario, the participants expressed their feelings about the phenomena and these findings will be presented in this section. The findings were divided into the following subordinate themes: the value of mentoring, the White mentor, giving back, and advice for future students.

The Value of Mentoring

All ten participants indicated during their interviews that they recognized the value of having a mentor. Furthermore, the majority of the participants revealed that their mentoring relationships were more significant because their mentor was of the same race and gender. Alexander, for instance, shared the following during his interview:

...having a mentor that is like you offers a perspective from a future standpoint that you may not see right now. So for example, if I was a mentor...I'm 22 years old and I have an 18-year-old mentee. I'm going to have some expertise in a few things that he might understand right now, but when he finally gets to that age he'll finally understand. I feel like having a mentor that's the same race and gender as you, it kind of helps you develop better... you understand that person a bit more and you respect them a bit more from being in the you know, kind of same shoes as you. So it just kind of alters your way of thinking. You are like; this person has a few more things than you do. So, to have someone that looks just like you kind of impacts how you view them, and it helps you relate to them like a big brother.

According to Alexander, being able to relate to his mentor was a very important reason for having a mentor of the same race and gender. Brock shared a similar view on the value of his mentoring relationship. He stated:

I do see the value in having a mentor of the same race and gender, especially of the same gender because there are certain things you are able to talk about ...man to man that you can't talk to a female about.....from an African American stand point...there are not enough African American males in Stem.....so having someone to rely on that has followed the same path and be from the same cultural background has helped me see that I have hope. It wouldn't help me if I had been mentored by a white male...cause I see these guys every day and they have no interest in talking to me...or developing a relationship with me...certain things that I have gone through, I know they would not understand...unlike my mentor who is African American. He understands me.

Isaac, like Alexander and Brock, also shared during his interview the importance of having a mentor that he could relate to during their relationship. Here is how Isaac described the value of his mentoring relationship:

...here at South University, I would say yes I need a mentor like Fredrick...simply from the fact that he and I weren't alike in every way possible...but the fact that we are both African American...we have a lot of things in common...there's, not a lot of us around here...and that helps...even though we might not have all of the same things in common...we have a few things in common...we have more in common than if I had a mentor of another race...We have a closer gap of things in common...rather than be food, music...there is something that would bridge us closer...I think in general...those small instances....there are things you can laugh and talk about ..I know what you know...and I'll feel comfortable sharing those experiences with you...those things are important to me...we understand each other...I feel comfortable sharing those experiences with him because we have bonded...and that's huge...that is something that is pretty big...the trust and the comradery we have together

In addition to the common ground that Isaac stated he has with his mentor, he also shared that he has relied on his mentor a lot more than he has given his credit for over the years.

John also shared his thoughts on the value of his mentor. When I asked John did he see any value in having a mentor of the same race/gender, he indicated “yes, I think you can relate to that individual because you already share two things in common.”

When I asked why he felt that way, this is what he shared about his mentoring relationship:

You're African American and you're a male. Which we see in society today is, that's kind of a hard place to be in our society in America, as an African American male. That's two things that you share in common with your mentor, which already you're able to connect on that level. I think everything else from there forward is an added benefit.

After this statement, I asked John to elaborate further, so he went on to explain just how important his mentoring relationship was to him.

...It gives you someone that you can look up to or relate to who looks like you. Normally a mentor sometimes is older or of the same age, but usually, a mentor that is mentoring you...they have had challenges in life themselves and overcame some obstacles, so it makes it easier to learn from their mistakes and challenges. They have a lot of wisdom to share and you have someone there that looks like you. So, they understand exactly what you've been through.

Keith also reflected on the value of his mentoring relationship with Dr. Bostic. He reflected on the common bond he has shared with his mentor and his overall feelings about their relationships.

I see tremendous value in our relationship. There is a common bond between us. We both can understand and relate to one another. He understands the challenges of being at a PWI-like South University and he knows what it's like to feel alone and isolated on a campus like this...he attended a PWI as well, so ironically he faced some of the same challenges I had and he knows how important having a source of support is...He allows me to be myself and he understands the language I speak and it's not an issue if I want to use a different genre when I speak...He understands and allows me to be me...the relationship has evolved and knowing that we are of the same race and gender makes it better. He can relate because he's been there.

Like Keith, Walter also reflected on the value of having a mentor from a similar background who has been through some of the same or similar experiences. Walter went on to share the following:

I would definitely say that I see the value in having a mentor of the same race and gender because a mentor is someone that you look up...it's an added plus is that mentor is from the same or similar background. They already took that path in life that you're trying to take. They can definitely give you advice on what you should and should not do, how you should go about certain situations, how should you handle life when it hits you in the face type deal.. I think it's important to have a Black mentor, period; somebody that is going to be a positive influence in your life, a person who will look out for your best interest.

Unique Experiences & Situation. Charles, Hayton, and Thomas all agreed during their interviews that they saw value in having a mentor of the same race and gender, but they provided their own reflections on why they felt the need should be based on the unique experiences of the participant and his situation. For example, Charles indicated during his interview that he valued his relationships with his mentor, but had his mentor been of another race or gender, he did not think it would have made a difference in the dynamics of their relationship. Charles disclosed the following:

I do see the value in having a mentor of the same race and gender, because, especially if they're years older than you, they've probably been through some of the same things you're going through now. Probably can tell you the right ways to do it and then, as a young man, having a mentor, you probably won't have to get into these situations where you're trying to figure out what to do. You're making the wrong mistake if you're listening to that person that you're going to. It gets you out of a lot of things where you don't have to think on your own. You can start hearing the thoughts of someone else. We all come from different backgrounds and we have different experiences, so needing a Black male mentor would just depend on the situation of that person.

When I probed Charles to explain what he meant, he shared the following:

I think everybody should have a mentor in some capacity, but an African American male? You may not need it. I feel like me personally, my mentor didn't

have to be African American. It just so happened that he was and he was in a position that he actually had done most of the things that I was doing. Let's say my mentor would have come with another race or gender, I wouldn't think that it would be any different. You have some males in college that do need that, especially at PWI, but I would have been good if he wasn't Black.

Like Charles, Hayton also shared that he believed the need for a mentor should be based on more than just a person's race and gender. Although he admitted that he valued his mentoring relationships with Xavier, he went on to state that their situation was unique.

...I do see the value in having Xavier as my mentor, but I think it's more of a cultural thing between us...I know plenty of white people who could give me advice...and I would have been ok...but it's just...Xavier came from a place that I came from...He was looking through the same eyes and lens I was looking through....It was easier for me to talk to him and listen to him...it was easier for him to understand my situation...A white person can do the same thing for you if they have been through the same thing as you have been through...

Thomas, on the other hand, reflected on the value of a same race/gender mentoring relationships and its impact on him personally. However, did he go on to acknowledge that other Black male students may have a different need based on their own personal experiences.

I definitely see the value... I'd definitely say it's a good thing. One, I feel like, as far as race, especially like at a PWI, people really don't understand where minority students come from a lot. They aren't necessarily walking in our shoes, so they can't see it from our point of view. We can tell them and they can say they understand, but they really don't truly see what we go through, our struggles. As far as gender, it's basically the same thing. One, men experience different things. To me, I just feel like it's good to have somebody there that you can actually relate to and talk to about things.

Thomas went on to reflect on where he felt others may not embrace his feeling on the value of a mentor of the same race and gender by sharing the following:

...I think having a Black male mentor was a good thing for me, and I feel like great things can come out of it. However, if someone feels like they can go through their college experience without having a mentor of the same race...and they can do it on their own and succeed, then, by all means, go ahead and try. I just know for me, I don't think I could have done it without mine.

Thomas went on to share how significant he felt this mentoring relationship had been to his overall success at South University. He credited the relationship for having an influence on his academic performance, social development, and his ability to make it to his senior year.

Needs at a PWI in the South. Although a few of the participants acknowledged that their mentor's value to them should not be predicated on race, the majority of them did, however, illustrate during their interviews the need for same race/gender mentoring at a PWI in the South. Travis shared that he grew up in a racist environment back in Augusta, Georgia, and went on to say that he has experienced many incidents of racism during his time as a student at South University. But he also stated that his mentor has been very instrumental in helping him navigate and persist as a student despite the negative experiences encountered over the last three years.

...Yes, I value my mentoring relationship with Eric and him being a Black male makes it all the more important because he knows what I deal with at this school. I mean I have been disrespected by so many White students here...I've even had bad encounters just going to Walmart and the grocery store; we Black men need Black male mentors at PWIs like South University because they understand our frustration, our highs and lows, and our struggles on campuses like this, especially here in the racist South...

Walter had a similar take on the topic during his interview. He reflected on his experiences at South University compared to his previous institution. Walter described

the need for a Black mentor at South University as much greater in comparison to the need for a mentor at the HBCU he attended prior to South University.

...the support that I had at...was crazy before I got here. I always had professors looking out for me and making sure I was ok; here, they don't care about me. Plus when you factor in all the crimes that have happened over the last few years have happened in the South and Southeast region, pretty much. It's tough enough that we are African-American men, but you live in the South and to be attending a PWI on top of that...it's crazy. As an African-American male, I don't want to see nobody fail, period, especially not my own people. That's something I don't tolerate. That's why it is important to have an African-American mentor at a school like this. That should not even be a thought in your mind that you shouldn't have one. Every Black male should definitely have that key factor in their life...

Walter also shared that the support he received at his prior institution was similar to what you would expect from your parents. He stated that the professors, and even the college president, treated him like family. He went on to point out that Joe and Jason have helped to fill that void by being available and supportive.

Additionally, Isaac also reflected on the reason why he felt there is a greater need for same race/gender mentoring relationships at a PWI in the South. According to Isaac:

If the African Mentor is a good thing to have here because I have experienced a lot of bad things on campus....I have experienced racial prejudice, I have experienced sexuality prejudice, just plain disrespect...not personally experienced discrimination based on sexuality prejudice...but I have seen it... I think an African American male mentor here on campus should be someone who is level headed...someone who is grounded...somebody who will soon enter the workforce...or is already in the workforce....someone to give you advice on how to handle those situations...give you a blueprint for guidance on how to deal with a lot of situations you would face attending a PWI in the South as a Black male: a way to map yourself...I think that is the value that an African American mentor can give to a mentee in the South...definitely...

Like Travis and Walter, Isaac also reflected on how his mentor has helped him navigate through the incidents of racism he encountered during his time at South University.

Having their mentor as a resource has helped each one of the participants navigate through many of the negative sides of campus life.

The White Mentor

As previously disclosed, Charles and Hayton both acknowledged that, although they both value the relationships they have with their mentor, mentoring relationships with a White person could have been just as impactful. Charles stated that his mentoring relationship was happenstance, and had his mentor been White, it would not have been any different. Hayton shared that he believed as long as the mentor comes from a similar background, that factor alone should trump race. Hayton went on to share the importance role that culture plays in a good mentoring match.

I base how I look at people off of culture, like culture wise....but a lot of people look at race...I mean I understand white people do that...and a lot of people look at race, they say, "he's a white man...and I'm a Black man"...It's a lot of white people that are racist...I just don't look at it like that...but certain people who do...they would need a Black mentor, cause they would feel like they would connect more with the Black man...but I don't look at it like that...

After this statement, I went on to ask Hayton to expound on the difference between culture and race, and this is what he shared:

So, let's say a Black child was adopted by a white family....he would be a part of their culture....even if he's Black and their white...he would still be a part of that same culture...and me...I even think its different cultures of Black people...Like me...I come from the project where the struggle is apparent at all time.....You have to do this to get to that point...I mean you barely getting above water....so my drive is completely different than another Black persons drive...that is upper or lower class...so all that goes into where you live...how you live....the cheap stuff is what poor Black people or poor white people are going to buy....so all that stuff goes into it...I think it's based on your financial situation...that plays a huge role in your culture.....it's also demographics to or where you live.....that plays a huge role in your culture...it's also like.....down South...the way people talk down here...the way we grow up....and the way people eat...stuff like that...and

the way people look at stuff...and you can go up north...and you see people grow up in a different way....the projects are different down here....

Hayton went on to state the selection of a mentor boils down to the way a person was raised and the environment that that person comes from. Ultimately, he disclosed that a Black male will migrate towards the person the feels most comfortable with; rather that person is a Black or a White male.

Brock, on the other hand, was very vocal during his interview about not seeing the value of a White male mentor. Brock based his beliefs on the experiences he had on campus. As previously disclosed, Brock stated that overall he did not feel wanted by his White professors on campus. Furthermore, he shared that he did not feel that the White professor's on campus were vested in his success.

Give Back

Keith, Walter, Brock, and Travis all indicated during their interviews they all felt compelled to give back as a result of their mentoring relationships. In Keith's case, he shared that Dr. Bostic has opened his eyes to the value of mentoring and because of that revelation; he now wants to give back to other Black males by becoming a mentor.

I wasn't very confident in my intellectual ability prior to meeting Dr. Bostic. He has helped me see my true potential and made me realize I can achieve just as well or better than my peers. I'm more confident now and I don't feel as alone any longer being at such a huge PWI. I know there are other Black males out there who are just as capable as I am, but they don't have anyone to help them reach their full potential. So because I look up to Dr. Bostic so much, I want to return the favor and go out into the community and become involved in mentoring another Black male...I am forever thankful for my mentor for inspiring me to give back to my community.

Like Keith, Brock also shared how he wants to repeat the "cycle" and give back as a result of the influence of his mentor as well. Brock went on the share that his motivation

comes from knowing other students are at similar institutions, so he indicated that he wanted to do his part in helping other students like him.

At most PWIs you won't find many African American males to talk to ...especially in classrooms or just available to mentor others as you would at an HBCU...so having someone that you can go talk to...other than about something other than school....cause my white teachers or foreign teachers...all they care to talk about is class and school work...sometimes you need some sort of outlets...someone to talk to, someone you can confide in...that can relate to your background...your struggles...and it's always good to have a different perspective other than yours on certain things...so I think it's very necessary...it also teaches you, when you get older, to set that cycle and it teaches you to give back...so now you become that bridge builder to give back and do the same for another African American student.

Brock admitted that he had been greatly influenced by his family members, who all attended HBCUs, but he was the first in this family to attend a PWI. Because of that influence, Brock indicated that he expected the same amount of "love and support" from South University that his other family members had received in the past from the HBCUs they had previously attended.

Similarly, Walter also shared that his mentoring relationships with his two mentors had also inspired him to want to become a mentor as well. Walter shared that he could see the difference between a PWI and an HBCU. He knows there is a greater need for Black male mentors at institutions like South University. Walter reflected further on his feelings towards becoming a mentor:

...I can most definitely see the light now, especially coming from ...university. I mean, I know how different the support system is between the two colleges and I see dudes on campus every day who are lost and need a Black man in their corner. I want to be that person now...I want to be just like Joe and Jason. If more dudes thought like that, this could be a better place to go to school...

Travis disclosed that he had already taken a substantial step towards giving back. He has become a mentor for the Big Brothers/Big Sisters volunteer program. Travis shared that his mentee is a young African American male attending one of the local schools in South University.

...little dude is only 10 years old, but he has never had a father figure in his life. I can see how impressionable he is and I want to continue to be that big brother and role model for him. My mentor Eric encouraged me to become a mentor, and I'm glad I listened to him...I love spending time with little man and his mom is happy he has someone to look up to since his dad was never around for him.

Travis went on to share that he was proud of the impact he has had on his participants life. He stated that he felt his actions were in a way "paying back the debt" he owed to his mentor, Eric.

Advice for Future Students

At the end of each interview, I asked each participant if they wanted to add anything before the interview ended, particularly on a topic they might have felt I did not cover in my questions. A few of them shared their advice on the importance of mentoring to future African American male students attending South University or any other PWI.

Isaac shared the following:

...I would say stay true to yourself...if you have a mentor you don't have to become that person...but I would say be who you are...I would advise them to get a mentor...cause there is a tremendous benefit in having a mentor to assist you in becoming a better person, but by all means be who you are and don't become that person.

Isaac shared that he believed a mentee should maintain his own individuality regardless of the influence his mentor might have on him.

Hayton also reflected on what advice he would give a future Black male attending a PWI. He explained:

I would tell them to get a mentor but I would tell them to connect with a senior ...he's been through it...and he can tell you exactly how to navigate and get to where you need to be...your goal is to get out and get where you want to go...so that person can tell you exactly where to go...well at least find someone you have something in common withat least someone who has your traits...or your character....or something similar to your character... and go from there...they don't necessarily have to be your mentor.. .but they can mentor you in that relationship...but I would say connect with someone older that has been through it....someone that has a journey similar to yours....or a character that's similar to yours.

As previously stated, Hayton continued to echo during his interview that similarities between mentor and mentee are the most important elements that produce the best mentoring pairs.

Charles also disclosed during this interview what advice he would give another African American male who was planning to attend a PWI in the South.

I think for students and young African American men at PWIs, they need to keep their eyes on "I need to get a degree, this is a person who has done it, and they are my color. Let me listen to how they did it." If it's just getting their mind set on it, they want to have the conversations "How do I navigate as an African American male at a PWI?" By all means, have that conversation. But what if they just need the navigation of "I need to have my degree, what did you do in college?" The added bonus of them looking like you, well that's a plus...bottom line is; use that person as a resource, learn from the things they did, and lean on them for support when you need it.

Charles went on to share that he felt "being in the epicenter of racial tension" is another compelling reason why a Black male should have another Black male mentor if that student is attending a large PWI in the South. Charles also disclosed that the pressure that comes from having to deal with racial tensions, alone, more than illustrates the need for same race/gender mentoring relationships.

Summary of Structural Elements

In this study, there were seven structural elements that made up the phenomenon of the lived experiences of the ten participants who were involved in a same race/gender mentoring relationship. The structural elements were: the early years; perception meets reality; building bridges: the mentor; the storm; needs; benefits & outcomes; and the significance of mentoring. Each structural element provided an opportunity to look into the personal experiences of each participant and see where commonalities existed amongst each mentee. The subordinate themes that emerged from the early years were early influences, the value of an education, and the need for a father figure. For perception meets reality the subordinate themes were positive perceptions, other expectations, preconceived notions shattered, not high school, culture shock, lack of support/no vested interested, campus climate, and feeling invisible/isolated. In the case of building bridges: the mentor, the subordinate themes that emerged were a rocky start, finding common ground, and expectations.

Next there was the storm. The subordinate themes that emerged from the storm were depression, betrayal, coping, and troubled waters/struggles. For needs, the subordinate themes that emerged were environmental (survival skills), social development, and the need for a father figure. In the case of benefits and outcomes, the subordinate themes that emerged were support & guidance, catalyst of change, and gratitude & gratification. Finally for significance, the subordinate themes that emerged were the value of mentoring, the White mentor, giving back, and advice for future students.

Chapter five will address the research questions and their relationships to the structural elements or master themes. Next, the findings will be discussed in relationship to the literature. Then, implications for practice and suggestions for future research will be discussed. Finally, I will close the chapter with my reflections on the study

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to share the research questions used in this study to better understand the lived experiences of the ten participants that participated in this study. By using an interpretative phenomenology approach (Willing, 2001), the phenomenon of same race/gender mentoring was explored in this study. The research questions were used to help give a snapshot into the lives of each participant and their journey from early childhood to college. The first section of this chapter will discuss the three research questions used in this study. Section II will discuss the findings in relationship to the literature. Section III will discuss suggestions for future research. Finally, section IV will close the chapter with my reflections on the study.

Section I: Research Questions as Related to the Findings

There were three research questions developed for this study. Seven structural elements emerged from the data collected. Most of the answers to the three questions were discussed in chapter four. This section will attempt to directly address the relevance of each structural element to each research question.

The first question focused on the experiences of the participants in mentoring relationships. The first question was: *What are the experiences of junior and senior undergraduate (or recent graduate) African American male students at South University who have formed mentoring relationships with another African American male?*

In order to get a better understanding of the participant's experiences, I had to first understand their background and early influences. Based on the data collected, the

first structural element called the “early years” emerged. The majority of the participants came from two parent households, only four of the ten were raised by one parent, in each case that one parent was a mother with the assistance of an extended family. When asked about early influences, some of the participants identified their fathers as a role model or someone they admired or strived to model their lives after. In either case, they all credited their mother or father (or both) as the person who pushed them to achieve academic excellence in school prior to attending college. Three of the participants identified early mentoring relationships as a source of influence prior to attending college.

The participants went on to share their experiences developing their mentoring relationships. This data were responsible for the structural element “building bridges”. Most of the participant’s mentoring relationships started off pretty rocky. Since most of them had strong academic records when they arrived at South University, they did not see the value in having a mentor. Eventually common ground was established in most of the relationships. The participants eventually saw the value in having a mentor of the same race and gender; especially when they needed a source of support to get them through the many problems they encountered on campus.

Most of the participants shared stories of feeling depressed, betrayed by their professors, problems coping with being a minority student on campus, and an array of other struggles and obstacles they encountered along the way. They all shared stories illustrating how they relied on their mentor to get them through “the storm”; which was the third structural element that emerged from the data collected.

The second research question examined how the participants used their mentoring relationships to help get through many of the challenges they were confronted with as a student. The second question was: *How has the mentoring relationship helped these students navigate their experience(s) on campus?*

In order to properly explore this question, the participants were asked about their early perceptions of South University, and those early perceptions were contrasted with the reality of college life. Nine of the ten participants indicated during their interviews that college was nothing like what they had previously envisioned. Only one of the participants acknowledged that South University was exactly what he expected. Because many of the participants preconceived notions of college life were shattered, they found themselves having to deal with many of the issues previously mentioned under research question one. Some of the realities they encountered ranged from culture shock, feeling unsupported, issues related to the campus climate, to feeling invisible or isolated, to name a few. Because of the reality of college life, “perception meets reality” emerged from the data as a structural theme.

“Needs” was the next structural theme that emerged from the data. Because of the different needs that developed from the participants, they were able to turn to their mentor to help them navigate through the realities of college life. The needs identified were survival skills, social development, and even a need for a father figure. In each case, the participants disclosed how they used their mentor as a source of support to help navigate them through each situation.

The third and final research question examined the impact that each mentoring relationship had on each mentee's ability to persist. The third question was: *To what extent does same race/gender mentoring promote persistence among African American males who are successful in college?*

The participants shared several benefits to being in a same race/gender mentoring relationship during their interviews. They also discussed the outcomes they have received as a result of the influence of their mentor. All of the participants gave credit to their mentor for being able to persist as a student at South University. However, two of the participants indicated that their mentors race and gender had little to no relevance to their ability to persist. In the case of the two participants, they both acknowledged the role their mentor played in helping them persist, but indicated had their mentor been White or of another race, they felt as if they would have been just as successful. The caveat for both of the participants was the common ground between mentor and mentee. They both felt like common ground and similarities between both parties trumps race when it came to mentor pairing.

Nevertheless, each participant ultimately acknowledged that same race and gender mentoring relationships played a significant role in their ability to persist. One of the reasons identified were the challenges they faced attending a PWI in the South. Because of geographic location, some felt the need for a same race/gender mentoring match was greater due to incidents of racism and the campus climate. Moreover, some of the participants stated they now feel compelled to give back by becoming a mentor. A few of

the participants went on to give advice to future students about the significance of same race/gender mentoring.

In closing, the findings of this study did indicate that same race/gender mentor was a successful intervention mechanism in assisting the participants with navigating through the many challenges they faced on campus. Because of their mentoring relationships, the participants were able to continue to persist towards graduation, In the case of two participants, they were able to use their mentoring relationships to complete their undergraduate studies, and they are now working on advanced degrees.

The participants in this study have faced many obstacles as African American males attending a predominately White Institution in the South. The findings revealed that these obstacles ranged from encounters with racism, feeling isolated, feelings of depression, financial issues, and problems coping. Regardless of the obstacles or challenges the participants faced, each one turned to their mentor to get them through the storms. Because of their experiences, the role that the mentoring relationship played in their ability to persist was the most prevalent finding in this study.

Section II: Findings as Related to the Literature

Interpretative phenomenology is a method of reviewing how participants lived experiences help to understand a phenomenon in a study (Willig, 2001). The structural findings that emerged from the participants lived experiences are discussed along with their relationship to relevant literature

Strayhorn et al. (2008) conducted a study at an HBCU where the theoretical framework of Othermothering emerged. According to the authors, the theory centered

around the vested interest that faculty and administrators took in developing relationships with their students. Through these relationships, the student became like family. So, I was motivated to see if the same level of care or motivation could be duplicated at a PWI university in the South. Based on the findings of this study, several of the participants did, in fact, indicate that the relationships they formed with their mentors extended beyond just mentoring. Furthermore, several of them viewed their mentors as members of their family; like big brothers or a substitute father.

Keith, for instance, described his relationship with Dr. Bostic as “a father figure” who has been there for him in ways that his own dad never was there to support him. Keith went on to share that Dr. Bostic told him on several occasions that he was personally vested in his success at South University because he knows what it feels like to be an African American male on the campus of a PWI in the South. According to the data collected, Keith indicated that Dr. Bostic made a deliberate effort to connect him with African American graduates of South University in an attempt to help him network and provide potential career contacts. From my interpretations of our interview, Keith was transparent about the intentions of his mentor, and it was easy to see how vested Keith’s mentor was in his success. Keith’s relationship with his mentor went beyond just a formal mentoring relationship, they became friends outside of school and Dr. Bostic took Keith under his wings and provided him guidance that allowed Keith to continue to persist at South University.

Similarly, John described his relationship with his mentor as one that extended beyond just a mentoring relationship. John shared with me that he was amazed how his

mentor, Wilbert, went above and beyond “the call of duty” to ensure that he was successful. One of the ways John’s mentor illustrated his care and commitment were by allowing John to move into his household during the time of John’s suspension from South University. From my interpretation of this story, Wilbert, John’s mentor, was afraid if John had returned home, he might have fallen victim to his surroundings and never return to school. To circumvent that from happening, Wilbert moved John into his house and worked with him to get him back in school, and helped to provide him an internship during his semester away from school. Based on my interview with John, the impacts of his mentor’s actions were profound. John walked from the experience with a newfound confidence and loyalty to his mentor. He knew from that moment on that Wilbert was more than just a mentor; he was family. In my opinion, this pattern of care exhibited by John’s mentor would be parallel to the ethnic care component that Strayhorn et al. (2008) wrote about in their study. John’s mentor created a nurturing environment that helped him to be successful and aided in his ability to return to South University and continue to persist.

Several of the participants shared similar stories about how they were positively impacted by the vested interest their mentors had in their success, not just academically but by being an all-around source of support. As a student at South University, I know first-hand some of the challenges African American males face on a daily basis. So, I was pretty excited to learn that some of the faculty and staff on campus had made deliberate attempts to advocate for some of the African American males in this study. Furthermore,

I was excited to know that feeling morally obligated to give back to African American students does exist, not only an HBCU but at a PWI-like South University.

Nine out of the ten participants in this study indicated that they were raised in the South. Out of the nine, two described their neighborhoods as either the ‘projects’, ‘crime infested’, or indicated they grew up in poverty. Another participant indicated he grew up poor. Morris & Monroe (2008) are proponents in the literature regarding the role poverty and geographic location play in the academic success of Black males. The authors have written about how growing up in the South can have a detrimental effect on achievement. In the case of the participants that self-identified that they grew up poor, they used their conditions growing up as motivation to be successful academically. In each scenario, their mother’s pushed them to do well in school and motivated them on the importance of attending college. All three of the participants arrived at South University with a 4.0 or above grade-point average.

However, two of the three participants eventually encountered academic difficulties, but each one turned to their mentors to overcome their obstacles academically. One was fortunate enough to have a mentor that specialized in academic support. Through that relationship, he was able to learn study and time management strategies which ultimately led to his ability to improve his grades. The other mentee allowed his mentor to give him guidance to get through difficult situations he encountered with his professors. Through his mentor’s guidance, he was able to learn how to communicate with his professors and the importance of teamwork. Unlike the study that was undertaken by Morris and Monroe (2008), growing up poor in the South

and living in poverty did not have a negative impact on the participants in this study. Instead, they used those obstacles as motivation to be successful. After they each left home, they turned to their mentors for additional inspiration and motivation to be successful.

The ultimate area of discussion in this study is the role that same race and gender mentoring relationships played in the participant's ability to persist at South University. As previously discussed, eight of the ten participants contributed their mentoring relationships to their ability to persist at a PWI in the South. Two, on the other hand, credit their relationships to their ability to persist as well but indicated that the benefits gained would have been the same had their mentor been White. Palmer and Young (2008-2009) conducted a similar study where the participants in their study credited their mentoring relationships as a major reason for their ability to persist as well. However, the mentoring relationships in the Palmer and Young (2008-2009) were not based on race or gender. Furthermore, the relationships formed were only with faculty. Unlike the relationships the participants formed in this study. Moreover, the Palmer and Young (2008) study took place in the mid-Atlantic region, unlike the current study that took place in the South.

Several studies were identified in the literature with regard to the benefits of mentoring (Palmer & Young, 2008; Gram & Hall, 1989; Brady and O'Regan, 2009; Scales et al., 2005; Bell, 1996; Brown, 1995) in general. Mentoring was identified as a way to help students cope with depression, isolation, academics, racism, etc. However, none of the aforementioned studies looked at same race/gender mentoring pairs.

Furthermore, none of the studies looked at the impact that a mentoring relationship at a PWI in the South could have on a mentee. Every participant in this study acknowledged the important role that these relationships had on them personally while they navigated through life as a student at South University. The participants were transparent about how this relationship helped them to deal with the racial climate at South University and how the relationship helped them deal with feeling isolated and alone. Additionally, most of them shared stories centered on how these relationships helped them cope as an African American male attending a majority White institution in the South.

Advice for Future Students

The participants were eager to offer their advice to future African American males attending South University. The majority of the participants stressed the importance of having a mentor to help navigate through life as a student. Several of them indicated they would encourage future students to find a mentor that “looks like you” and comes from the same or similar background. As a student, most of the participants in this study indicated that South University was a lonely place during their early years at the institution. So, they all stressed the importance of having a mentor to get through those lonely periods of adjustment to college life. But more specifically as an African American male, they recognized the importance of their mentoring relationship as a catalyst to get through the racial tensions that experienced at the institution.

Section III: Implications for Practice and Suggestions for Future Research

This study provided some insight into the lived experiences of African-American men who were in mentoring relationships with another African American male while

attending a PWI in the South. The findings have implications for higher education. The students in this study arrived on the campus of South University academically prepared for the rigors of college. However, they were each faced with several unforeseen obstacles like depression, isolation, betrayal, problems coping and adjusting to campus life just to name a few of the problems they encountered. As a result, the participants were lucky enough to have mentors to turn to that helped them overcome the issues they faced. In some cases, had their mentors not been there for a source of support, many of the participants would have either dropped out of school or been dismissed for academic reasons or other challenges.

As a result, institutions like the research site in this study have to recognize that being prepared for college academically is not a true indicator of an African American's male's ability to persist. These institutions have to be strategic and implement programs that help to advocate for the success of this population.

One such strategy could be the continued establishment of Black male initiatives like those at The Ohio State, UCLA, Sam Houston, and other institutions mentioned in the literature. Moreover, more efforts need to be made to pair African American males with African American male mentors. Initially, I thought as a researcher, there would be a shortage of potential African American male mentors on the campus of South University. However, when I was consolidating a list of African American males that are members of faculty and staff, I was completely surprised by the number of African American's males that were employed by the institution. I recognize that all PWIs may be unique when it comes to the population of African American males employed by an

institution. Nevertheless, these institutions need to become more strategic in creating initiatives that allow this silent population of employees to become involved in efforts to participate in mentoring African American Students. Moreover, these employees need to be encouraged to become more involved in programs that connect them to the African American male student population. As mentioned by Mitchell & Stewart (2012), combating the challenges faced by African American males requires an institutional commitment. Therefore, these institutions cannot just sit silently and allow this population to continue to struggle and go unnoticed.

This study involved hearing only the experiences of the African American male. Future research might consider exploring this phenomenon of mentoring from the vantage point of the mentor instead of the mentee at the same type institution. To conduct a similar study that allows the mentor to tell his story, might help to further raise awareness of the need for these mentoring relationships at other PWIs in the South. All students in the current study were between the ages of 22 to 27. As a researcher who falls into the untraditional student category due to my age, an additional study examining the role mentoring can have on the non-traditional African American student's ability to persist could further enhance this study's findings and provide valuable knowledge to academia.

Section IV: Closing Reflections

This has been an amazing journey, and I never honestly thought I would get to this point in this study. I set out to explore the lived experiences of ten African American males attending South University in order to uncover their experiences while in a

mentoring relationship with another African American male. I had some reservations going into this study because I knew I could not select any of the students I mentor. So, I often wondered if I would be able to find ten additional African American males outside of the few that I currently mentor at the institution used this study.

To my surprise, I was able to find ten willing participants. So, I started my journey to uncover their experiences. The ten participants were an awesome group of intelligent young men from various backgrounds and regions in the South; one participant was even from the North. While the majority of them came from two-parent households, a few were raised by their mothers. Regardless, they all arrived at South University with impeccable academic records. Furthermore, most had the luxury to attend almost any school in the country which speaks volumes about the institutional reputation of the institution in this study.

Before I go further, I am inclined to backtrack and focus on my reasons for conducting this study. I arrived at South University almost four years ago as a non-traditional student who decided to go back and pursue obtaining a doctoral degree. I arrived on campus with years of corporate and private sector experience under my belt. I had been fortunate enough to work for several major corporations, and I had also previously attended a PWI and an HBCU for my undergraduate and masters. Therefore, I had no real concerns about attending a majority White institution. Furthermore, I was always accustomed to being one of only a handful of Black males in the corporate or private sector.

Unfortunately, I was not as prepared for the realities of attending this PWI as I had originally thought. Prior to attending South University, I had always been fortunate enough to have supportive relationships and a close-knit circle of friends and allies. However, for the first time in my life, I was in an environment where I felt alone and lacked the support that I needed to persist. Do not get me wrong, the institution was full of some amazing faculty, staff, and students. I had been fortunate enough to make acquaintances with some great individuals. Additionally, I was thankful for the faculty and staff in my department and others I had come in contact with across campus. Nevertheless, I found myself needing more than just the casual interactions I had on a daily basis. I needed a mentor. I need someone to talk to beyond just the surface conversation. I needed a connection with someone who was genuinely vested in my success. This was the relationship I longed for and tried to establish unsuccessfully.

I could probably write a book about my experiences at South University, both positive and negative, but that is not my intention here for the purpose of this study. In short, I was unable to establish a real mentoring relationship with anyone since I arrived on campus. Although I am older than the traditional college student between the ages of 22 to 27 in this study, the need for a deeper level of support never went away. For that reason, as previously mentioned in this study, that motivated me to go out and establish relationships with other African American males on campus as a way to circumvent them from having similar experiences. In an ironic way, these relationships have been a catalyst for change in my attitude and perception of South University. Through these

relationships, I have been able to garner the strength and motivation I needed to continue to persist towards getting my Ph.D.

My personal experience as a student at South University was the motivation I needed to undertake this study. In doing so, I have been able to hear the stories of ten incredible African American males. Through their stories, I know firsthand that we have all encountered some of the same obstacles and struggles as African American males at this university. I'm hoping the results of this study can help serve as a wake-up call to this institution, and similar higher education institutions, that proactive steps need to be undertaken to help African American males persist. Based on the results of this study, one strategy that is desperately needed is same race/gender mentoring. The impact that these relationships have had on the men in this study is noteworthy and speaks volumes about the importance of these relationships at institutions like South University.

The majority of my participants, including myself as a student at the same institution, recognized the importance and the value of these relationships. This fact was illustrated in this study. However, I think large institutions have to do more to recognize the needs of the African American male student and the challenges we face at institutions like South University. I know this study will not immediately create a path of change that will be immediately implemented, but I am hoping that this study will, at least, start the dialogue and shed light on the needs of African American males attending PWIs in the South. In conclusion, I will end with an excerpt from a poem I found while researching this study (from an unknown author):

“The student is the most important person on this campus. Without them, there would be no need for this institution. We are dependent on them. They are not to

be hurried away so we can do our own thing...they are our thing. They are not an interruption to our work, but the purpose of it.”

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Student Recruitment Letter

Date

Dear Student:

I am writing to request your participation in a study to explore the experiences of African American males in same race/gender mentoring relationships at your institution. Specifically, this study will examine the role that same race/gender mentoring has on the persistence rates of African American males who have already either made it to their junior/senior year of college, or recently graduated. There is no risk to you in this study. Your participation involves one face-to-face interview where you would answer 4 demographic questions and 19 questions about your mentoring relationship and your experiences on campus. It is estimated this interview will take 45-60 minutes of your time. Your identity in this study will remain confidential and I will use a pseudonym for your name in the final report.

This study will have a potential benefit to the college/university sector. It will allow us to have a better understanding of how same race/gender mentoring affects the persistence rates of African-American males in college and, as a result, make recommendations pertinent to having more African American males at predominantly White colleges academically succeed.

Please, respond to this email by indicating your willingness to participate in this study. Please also indicate in your response if you are currently participating in a mentoring relationship with another African American male. If you are a recent graduate, please indicate if you were involved in this relationship during your undergraduate experience at your institution. If you have any additional questions or comments, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. James W. Satterfield from Clemson University at (864) 656-5111 or satter3@clemson.edu, or Mr. Jonathan C. Pettigrew from Clemson University at (818)720-4027 or pettig4@clemson.edu.

Thank you for your willingness to help shed light on the importance role that mentoring may play in improving the experiences of African American males' attending Predominately White Institutions.

Sincerely,

Jonathan C. Pettigrew

Appendix B

Faculty/Staff Recruitment Letter

Date

Dear Faculty/Staff:

I am writing to request your participation in a study to explore the experiences of African American males in same race/gender mentoring relationships at your institution. Specifically, this study will examine the role that same race/gender mentoring has on the persistence rates of African American males who have already either made it to their junior/senior year of college or recently graduated. There is no risk to you in this study. Your participation involves simply identifying one or more African American males that you currently mentor at your institution. If your mentee has recently graduated, please identify that individual (**only**) if you mentored him during his time as an undergraduate at your institution. Once this information is provided, I will contact your mentee to ask him to participate in this study. Your identity in this study will remain confidential and I will use a pseudonym for your name in the final report.

This study will have a potential benefit to the college/university sector. It will allow us to have a better understanding of how same race/gender mentoring affects the persistence rates of African-American males in college and, as a result, make recommendations pertinent to having more African American males at predominantly White colleges academically succeed.

Please, respond to this email by indicating your willingness to participate in this study. Please also indicate in your response the name and contact information for your mentee. If your mentee is a recent graduate, please provide that individual's personal email address, along with their name. If you have any additional questions or comments, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. James W. Satterfield from Clemson University at (864) 656-5111 or satter3@clemson.edu, or Mr. Jonathan C. Pettigrew from Clemson University at (818)720-4027 or pettig4@clemson.edu.

Thank you for your willingness to help shed light on the important role that same race/gender mentoring may play in improving African American male persistence rates.

Sincerely,

Mr. Jonathan C. Pettigrew

Appendix C

Informed Consent

Information about Being in a Research Study
Clemson University

An Interpretative Phenomenological Study Exploring The Experiences Of African American Males In Same Race/Gender Mentoring Relationships While Attending A Predominately white Institution In The South

Description of the Study and Your Part in It

Dr. James W. Satterfield, Associate Professor of Education and Organizational Development at Clemson University, along with Jonathan Pettigrew, Educational Leadership Doctoral Student at Clemson University, invite you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of African American males in same Race/Gender mentoring relationships.

Specifically, we would like to ask you to participate in an interview. The interview will take between 45-60 minutes and will be recorded on a digital recorder. The interview can be conducted in a format that is most convenient and preferable to you; either face-to-face, telephone or Skype. The time and location of the interview will be based on your preference and convenience. All recordings will be stored under lock and key and will be coded with a pseudonym. Once your interview has been transcribed, you will receive a scanned copy of your consent form as well as a “raw” transcription of the interview. You could also be contacted via e-mail or telephone with follow up questions or for clarification after the interview.

Risks and Discomforts

We do not know of any risks or discomforts to you in this research study.

Possible Benefits

Potential benefits incurred from this research include a better understanding of how same race/gender mentoring may influence the persistence rates of African-American males in college.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

The research team will do everything to protect your privacy and confidentiality. Specifically, your name will never be used in any dissemination of the work (reports, analysis, articles, and presentations, etc...). You will be assigned a pseudonym. In

addition, disciplines will not be specified. For example, a student in Sociology would be identified as a Liberal Arts student. Additionally, any unique information that might make you identifiable will be excluded. For instance, if you are the African American male in Sociology at your university; this information will be masked as “an underrepresented student navigating a liberal arts discipline.” Demographic data will only be used if it is possible to ensure the participants’ anonymity. In efforts to protect confidentiality, any data collected will be kept under lock and key and password protected. Lastly, all recordings will be destroyed once the data is no longer needed for current or further research.

Choosing to Be in the Study

You do not have to be in this study. You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. James W. Satterfield at Clemson University at satter3@clemson.edu or 864-656-5111.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-0636 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC’s toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this form will be given to you.

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Greetings and Introduction:

This purpose of this study is to assess the experiences of Undergraduate (and recent graduate) African American male students who are currently involved in a mentoring relationship with another African American male while attending a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the South.

You received an email about this project, but I realize you may have some questions about the study. Before we proceed, is there anything more you would like to know about the study?

Our interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The interview consists of three sections:

1. First, I will ask you to tell me a little about your background, you family, and how you decided to attend Clemson University?
2. Then, I will ask you a series of questions about your mentoring relationship. I will ask you to focus on your experiences since being in your mentoring relationship, especially surrounding how this relationship has evolved while matriculating as a student at Clemson University. I will ask you specific questions about the dynamics that have been established between you and your mentor.
3. Finally, I will ask you to talk about your experiences navigating through your time as a student here at Clemson. I will ask you to talk about any obstacles or barriers you have experienced while on campus as a student. Furthermore, I would like for you to talk about what value if any, your mentoring relationship

played in helping you navigate through any challenges you might have experienced. If you are a recent graduate of Clemson, I will ask you to talk about how you think your mentoring relationship played a role in allowing you to persist towards graduation, if it played a role at all.

Confidentiality and Voluntary Participation

As I indicated in the introductory email, I will treat your data and your documents with the strictest confidence. For example, I will not use your name or mentors' names in public reports of the study; rather I will use pseudonyms to refer to people. I will also use a variety of editing and masking techniques to avoid divulging your identity and your mentors' identities. In addition, as we proceed through the interview today, please point out any issues that you may wish to keep "off the record" in published reports. Despite the care I take to avoid divulging identity, in a study like this, there is always the possibility that your confidentiality might be breached.

Finally, I also want to clarify that your participation in this study is completely free and voluntary; you may refuse to respond to any questions; and you may discontinue the study at any time. How much you say and what you choose not to say is up to you.

This consent form details what I just told you about confidentiality. Could I ask you to read this form at this time, and let me know if you have any questions?

With your permission, I would like to record this interview, in order to have a comprehensive record of our conversation. Is that acceptable to you?

_____ Yes _____ No

If at any time you would like me to turn off the recorder, please let me know and I will pause or turn off the recorder.

Part I – Demographics & Background

- 1) Demographic Questions:
 - a. Please tell me your current age?
 - b. What is your academic level?
 - c. Did you transfer from another institution?
 - d. Where are you from (City/State)?

- 2) Background: Tell me a little about yourself, you background, and why you decided to attend college:
 - a. Were you raised by your mother and father?
 - b. More specifically, who did you live with prior to attending college?
 - c. Did either one of your parents attend college?
 - d. Tell me about your academic performance pre-college?
 - e. How did you go about deciding to attend college?
 - f. Why Clemson University?
 - g. What was your perception of Clemson before attending?
 - h. Where you in a formal mentoring program before coming to college? If yes, please provide additional information about this program.
 - i. Was there an African American male you looked to as a mentor prior to attending college? If yes, why? If not, why not?
 - j. What are some obstacles, if any, you think you faced (growing up) that might have had a significant impact on your ability to attend college?

Part II – Mentoring Relationship

- 1) Who is your mentor?
 - a. Was this relationship established before Clemson or since you have been on campus?

- b. Are you a part of one of the mentoring programs on campus? If not, how was this relationship established?
- c. How has this relationship developed over time?
- d. Do you look to your mentor as a source of support here at Clemson? Why/why not?
- e. Let's reflect on your mentoring relationship. What are some personal outcomes, if any, that you expected from having a mentor?

Part III – Navigating/Persisting Through Campus Life

- 1) Has your current mentoring relationship had an influence on your educational and personal development so far since you have been on campus (or before you graduated)? In other words, how has your mentor influenced you academically, educationally, or personally, if at all?
 - a. Talk about some of the highs and lows of this mentoring relationship? Or tell me about a time you relied on your mentor to get you through a situation, or maybe give you some advice or guidance?
 - b. Do you see any value in having a mentor of the same gender/race? Why, Why not?
 - c. Do you think you could have been as successful at this University if you did not have this person to influence you?
 - d. Do you think all African American males attending a PWI should have another African American male mentor? Or what value could an African American male mentor have to another African American male student attending a PWI in the South?
 - e. Have you changed any as a result of the influence of your mentor? Why/why not?

- f. Is there something that I have not covered that you believe is important for me to know concerning your experiences in a same race/gender mentoring relationship?

Appendix E

The Structural Elements

Master Theme: Early Years	Master Theme: Perception Meets Reality	Master Theme: Building Bridges	Master Theme: Needs	Master Theme: Benefits & Outcomes	Master Theme: Significance
Subordinate Themes:	Subordinate Themes:	Subordinate Themes:	Subordinate Themes:	Subordinate Themes:	Subordinate Themes:
1. Early Influences	1. Positive Perceptions	1. Rocky Start	1. Environmental Needs	1. Support & Guidance	1. The Value of Mentoring
2. Value of an education	2. Greatest Place on Earth	2. Finding Common Ground	2. Need for a Father Figure	2. Influence	2. Unique Experiences
3. Admiration for dad	3. Welcoming Environment	3. I Don't Need You	3. Need for Survival Skills	3. Academic Support	3. Situational
4. Environmental Influences	4. Other Expectations	4. Fraternal Bond	4. Need for Social Development	4. Fraternal Bond	4. Needs at a PWI
5. Need for a Father Figure	5. Racism	5. Expectations	Master Theme: The Storm Subordinate Themes:	5. Resourceful	5. Needs in the South
6. Southern Upbringing	6. "White-Washed"			6. Professionalism	7. The White Mentor
7. Academic Excellence	7. No Expectations			8. Self-Actualization	9. Advice for Future Students
	8. Preconceived Notions Shattered			10. Gratitude & Gratification	11. Give Back
	9. Culture Shock			12. Academics	
	10. Lack of Support		13. Mentor to Brother		
	11. No Vested Interest		14. Catalyst for Change		
	12. Campus Climate		15. Blueprint for Guidance		
	13. Feeling Invisible		16. Personal Growth		
			17. Expectations Met		
			18. "I See the Light"		

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