

MENTORING EXPERIENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE BLACK MALES: A CASE
STUDY OF THEIR JOURNEYS, ACCESS, AND PARTICIPATION

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MENTORING EXPERIENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE BLACK MALES: A CASE
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is respectfully dedicated to my family and friends for your encouragement and support during this journey, to my mentors for allowing me to stand on the shoulders of giants and instilling in me the desire to pay it forward, and to the youth who march onward and upward toward the light.

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ABSTRACT

MENTORING EXPERIENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE BLACK MALES: A CASE STUDY OF THEIR JOURNEYS, ACCESS, AND PARTICIPATION

by

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Texas State University-San Marcos

August 2013

SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: CLARENA LARROTTA

The present qualitative case study documents the mentoring relationships and collegiate experiences of eight undergraduate Black males as well as their self-reported participation and access to mentoring. The main research question guiding the study was: What are the mentoring relationships and collegiate experiences of eight undergraduate Black males as well as their self-reported participation and access to mentoring? The supporting questions included: (1) What does mentoring look like for undergraduate Black males? (2) What are their perceptions of mentoring relationships? (3) How do these mentoring relationships impact their collegiate experience? Data collection sources for this study were: individual interviews, artifacts identified by the participants, a focus group session, and field notes. Narrative analysis served as the method for data analysis as data were collected through stories and accounts of the individual and collective experiences of the study participants. To this end, this dissertation provides two chapters

for study findings, chapter four and chapter five. Chapter four provides detailed insight into the personal background of the eight Black male undergraduate participants, what mentoring looks like for them, and their perceptions of mentoring relationships. Chapter five documents the participant's access to various forms of capital and the experiential learning product of their participation in mentoring programs offered by the university. Study findings are presented in light of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory and forms of capital as described in the work of Bourdieu (1986) and Yosso (2005) and consist of cultural capital, social capital, and navigational capital. Finally, the last chapter presents highlights of participants' perceptions about mentoring, a suggested best practices model, tensions and challenges related to the study, implications for practice, and ideas future research.

CHAPTER I

MENTORING BLACK MALES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

When I was a young high school student my primary concerns were twofold: buying a car to avoid riding the bus to school, and hanging out with my friends! However, during my sophomore year a new teacher started working at my school; he was the geometry teacher and the new head coach for track and field. When I met him, I had no idea the impact that he would have on my life... From the moment we met it was evident that he was ready to invest in my educational wellbeing. Yet, my first reaction was to dislike him! He was very hard on me; at least that was my impression. I couldn't be more mistaken... He told me I had potential and encouraged me to tap into it. Soon, we began talking about life after high school and plans for my future education. He helped me to believe that college was an option for me and that I could be successful there. He took me on college tours and helped me secure financial aid. This was very important because as a first generation college student nobody in my family had the information needed or the tools to help me with this process. At this point I realized that having met my mentor was truly a blessing! To this day he continues to provide guidance and through the years he has connected me with mentors in other areas of life as well. All in all, my outlook in life has been changed drastically by our interactions. As a result, one of my goals in life is to serve as a lifelong mentor. Hopefully, I will be able to

provide others with the same type of experiences and assistance I was fortunate to receive.

Needless to say, I consider myself to be product of beneficial mentoring relationships since my youth and I have also been mentored by upper level administrators. I am a student affairs professional who has worked at the Residence Life Office of a large university in Central Texas for the past 8 years. In my current position and through volunteer efforts I have served as a mentor to undergraduate students and entry level staff members at the institution. Due to the tight knit nature of the relatively small Black community (6% of 32,500) at my institution and my role as an instructor, advisor, mentor, and friend, I am known by the majority of the Black men on campus. The life altering and, in some cases, lifesaving impact of mentoring relationships on people's lives have led me to study mentoring as a dissertation topic.

My institution has the Graduating Student Recognition of Campus Support Program which is an opportunity for seniors to recognize faculty and staff who have made a difference in their lives academically or personally during their time with us. As a result, I received a letter from a student that I had mentored and it read: "I just wanted to thank you for all that you have done for me. You have truly been a supervisor, mentor, brother, and friend." I was honored to receive this letter because it reassured me that I was fulfilling my obligation to give back. As a first generation college student, had it not been for the mentorship of my high school track coach I would likely not have attended college. Likewise, once I arrived on campus I quickly formed a bond with a professor who became my mentor and helped me navigate the college system during my four years of undergraduate studies and who encouraged me to pursue graduate studies. In

summary, this and other mentoring relationships have been instrumental in placing me where I am today and I am determined to give back to the students who follow in my footsteps. These positive mentoring experiences have played a major role in me choosing a career in student affairs. This dissertation has allowed me to discover new ways to serve our students while assessing our current practices.

In this study mentoring refers to the reciprocal relationship between two individuals; the relationship usually consists of a more experienced individual and a novice. Such mentoring relationship is “multidimensional, dynamic, and reciprocal...” (Girves, Gwathmey, & Zepeda, 2005, p. 453) and the mentor oversees the development of the mentee either directly or indirectly (see Appendix A for definitions of relevant terms). The present qualitative case study documents the mentoring relationships and collegiate experiences of eight undergraduate Black males as well as their self-reported participation and access to mentoring. The study is framed in light of the work of Bourdieu (1986) and Yosso (2005) related to forms of capital and Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory.

Personally, I was introduced to mentoring through the Nigerian proverb “Ora na azu nwa” which translates to “it takes a village to raise a child”. Growing up in a Black community in Charlotte, North Carolina, this proverb was used to stress the importance of community and sticking together. This concept was most often uttered right before one of us, my friends or I, were about to be disciplined. In our community the scolding, beating, or punishment were strategies that adults used to discipline and show they cared for our wellbeing and could come from any elder in the community. Everyone was very “intrusive” and had a vested interest in the success of the children in the neighborhood.

The successes were shared as were the failures, thus causing a truly united group of people. However, it seems like modernity and new preoccupations have had an impact on my community and this practice is not as prevalent as it was once. For example, I do not see the groups of children playing the way they did 20 years ago and I do not see the community serving as a support system for children as prominently as in the past. These actions make me wonder if this change has happened in the Black community as a whole. Times have changed rapidly and as the amount of technology increases it seems to have an impact on the quality of interpersonal relationships. “It takes a village” seems to have been replaced with “am I my brother’s keeper?”

Am I my brother’s keeper? Comes from the Bible; specifically, the book of Genesis, and focuses on brothers Cain and Able, the children of Adam and Eve. Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd. Upon reaching maturity the brothers made sacrificial offerings to God. Cain made an offering of fruit while Abel sacrificed the first born of his flock. Abel’s sacrifice was respected and Cain’s was not, this made him very angry. When the brothers returned to the field Cain rose up and killed his brother Abel. God went to Cain and asked “where is Abel your brother?” Cain replied “I do not know, am I my brother’s keeper?” Have Cain's words come to symbolize people's unwillingness to accept responsibility for the welfare of others? It seems to coincide with the rise of numerous issues facing the Black male in our society today. The crab mentality, me first, flash over substance approach portrayed by Blacks in the media has permeated the culture and has helped lead to numerous issues facing the Black male in our society today.

Statement of the Problem

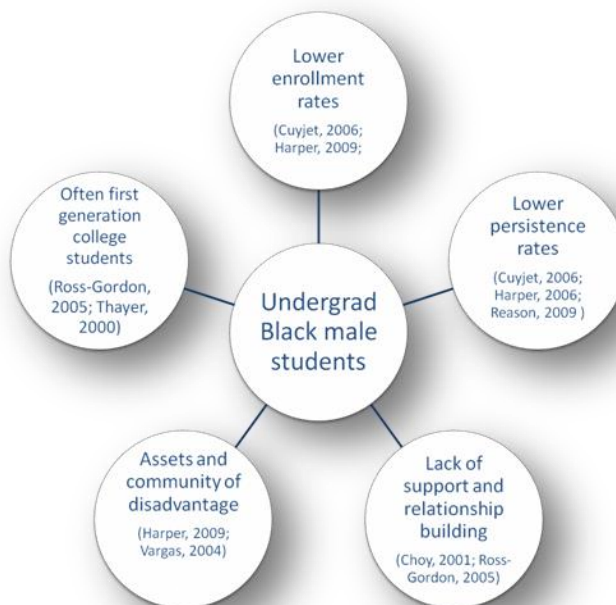


Figure 1.1 Statement of the Problem

As illustrated in figure 1.1, the problem under study is a multilayer phenomenon; across the board Black men are facing a myriad of issues that are unique to their population. The first issue is that this population of students enrolls in higher education at a low rate (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2009). In particular, Harvey and Anderson (2005) report that the growth rate of Black men enrolling in college is the lowest in the Nation. Black men are not being educated at the same rate as other groups putting them at a disadvantage. We all know that the opportunity to pursue higher education is very important and Black men are either not getting the access to attend institutions of higher education or they are not taking advantage of it at the same level as their counterparts. This issue is compounded by the national trend where the number of men in general who are attending colleges and universities is declining (Valbrum, 2013). Also, Carey (2008)

reports that less than half of the African American students who start at a college or university graduate within the expected six year frame.

Research shows that when Black men do make it to an institution of higher education, their retention and graduation rates are usually lower than their White counterpart (Carey, 2008; Cuyjet, 2006; Reason, 2009). Similarly, a review of retention research focusing on socio-demographic characteristics conducted by Reason (2009) concluded that “gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (SES) were generally found to be related to persistence in higher education” (p. 663). Another study by Carey (2008) reported 94 colleges and universities (historically Black college and universities not included) with a small or non-existent difference in Black and White student graduation rates. Of these 94 there were 62 colleges and universities (the host site for the research included) where Black students had a higher graduation rate than White students— a very small number when compared to the total number of higher education institutions in the United States.

Another layer of the problem relates to the low number of faculty and staff members of color that the students can relate to at campuses (Lee, 1999). Some researchers (Cuyjet, 2006; Ross-Gordon, 2005) agree that for Black men and students of color to be successful in the college environment and persist through degree completion, they need the support of groups, peers, faculty, and staff who look alike. Specifically, a study by Ross-Gordon (2005) reports that one of the primary factors that facilitates college success for students of color include supportive others such as family members, faculty, staff, and peers. Ross-Gordon further explains that the participating adult learners of color in her study identified the obstacles encountered for college success to

include: a large proportion of the study participants being first generation college students, concerns with low socioeconomic status, lack of role models among faculty and staff, and discomfort sharing their life experiences with poverty and racism. To this effect, Strayhorn and Terrell (2007) explain that “Minority students who do not have role models may find succeeding in higher education difficult...” (p. 70); these researchers add that mentoring can provide students with positive role models to succeed at the university level.

Additionally, Kuh and Pike (2005) state that African American students are more likely to come from low socio-economic homes, their parents have earned fewer degrees, work in lower status occupations, and have higher divorce rates when compared to other groups. These authors highlight the negative and reinforce the stereotype with their assertions blaming the victim (Valencia, 1997). They fail to consider aspects such as: low income, minority, and first-generation students may not have had access to information about the college experience (Thayer, 2000), have not received adequate help from their schools to apply for college (Choy, 2001), may encounter a cultural conflict between home and college (Thayer, 2000), and are more likely to be heavily dependent on financial aid (Fischer, 2007). There can be doubt and skepticism from family members about them choosing to attend college; some tend to think that the student is acting White, believe they are better than their family and friends, and are accumulating debt in the process (Choy, 2001; Fischer, 2007; Harper, 2009; Thayer, 2000). The reality is that these students bring aspirations for improving their economic and occupational standing (Ayala & Striplen, 2002), and other assets that need to be tapped into.

Research Questions

This dissertation was accomplished by providing eight undergraduate Black male participants the opportunity to share their unique stories and reflections on mentoring as related to their collegiate experiences. The main research question guiding the study was: What are the mentoring relationships and collegiate experiences of eight undergraduate Black males as well as their self-reported participation and access to mentoring? The supporting questions included:

1. What does mentoring look like for undergraduate Black males?
2. What are their perceptions of mentoring relationships?
3. How do these mentoring relationships impact their collegiate experience?

Purpose of the Study

This study adds to the existing literature on Black males in higher education by focusing on how these undergraduate students conceptualize participation and access to mentoring. The main goal was to document the mentoring experiences of eight undergraduate Black males. Through reporting on their stories other students, faculty, staff, policy makers and stake holders can gain a deeper understanding of the role of mentoring in the collegiate experiences of this population. This information helps make it possible to draw implications for practice for institutions of higher education and for student affairs professionals serving Black males enrolled in undergraduate studies. Similar institutions of higher education can benefit from the stories documented in this dissertation by transferring study findings. Study findings have the potential to inform the design and implementation of strategies for recruitment and retention of students of

color, specifically, Black males. More important, study findings have potential to inform policy makers whose decisions impact this group.

Onsite Mentoring Programs

This section describes the mentoring programs that study participants had a chance to get involved in as mentees. There are two formal programs which are the African American Male Dialogue Series (AAMDS) and the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) mentoring program. There is also the opportunity for the students to form informal mentoring relationships through the Coalition of Black Faculty and Staff (CBFS). The AAMDS Program was created to promote student retention and graduation. The program objectives are to: Engage the students in conversations to identify obstacles hindering their retention, provide a forum for the students to speak freely about issues that are important to them, provide an avenue for this group of males to develop and refine their leadership skills, address the lack of involvement on campus among this group, and to develop mentoring relationships between Black male students and key Black male faculty and staff members on campus. Participants in this program range in academic classification from first semester undergraduate freshmen to graduate students. Each student participant is invited by either the faculty and staff members who advise the organization or by their peers who are already members of the program. The organization provides accountability and multilayered mentoring with peers at each stage of the matriculation process and with faculty and staff.

In the VPSA mentoring program Students are able to request a faculty, staff, and peer mentor by filling out a questionnaire. Students are then paired with a faculty or staff member who has similar interests and/or career focus. The mentor and mentee are each

given the others contact information so that they can set up an initial meeting. The peer mentor component is made up of students who were in the mentoring program as freshmen but now are upperclassmen and would like to help their fellow students. The students are matched with a mentee in the same way that the faculty and staff are. Peer mentors are assigned to the students in addition to a faculty or staff mentor. Due to the low number of professional mentors in certain years the peer component is very important to the program.

Dissertation Roadmap

In chapter one I introduce the study and describe a personal encounter that ultimately inspired me to focus on this research topic. This chapter also provides the statement of the problem, the research study questions, the purpose of the study, and the mentoring programs available to the study participants. Next, chapter two provides a review of selected literature on the topics of mentoring, mentoring students of color in higher education, Black culture, the literature explaining the theory on forms of capital, and the literature on experiential learning theory. Chapter three focuses on the methodology and overall research design. It details the researcher's roles, the study setting, the research participants, the data collection procedures, the data analysis, and the significance of the research. Chapters four and five present the study findings. Chapter four provides detailed insight into the personal background of the eight undergraduate Black male participants, what mentoring looks like for them, and their perceptions of mentoring relationships. Next, chapter five documents the participant's access to various forms of capital and the experiential learning product of their participation in mentoring programs offered by the university. Study findings are presented in light of Kolb's

(1984) experiential learning theory and forms of capital as described in the work of Bourdieu (1986) and Yosso (2005) to include: Cultural capital, social capital, and navigational capital. Finally, chapter six highlights important concepts presented through study findings and it presents a best practices model for mentoring Black undergraduate male students to achieve successful retention and graduation of this group of students. It also presents a discussion on the tensions and challenges related to the study, implications for practice, and ideas for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This qualitative case study documents the mentoring relationships and collegiate experiences of eight undergraduate Black males as well as their self-reported participation and access to mentoring. The present chapter provides a review of the literature as divided into six sections: Mentoring, mentoring students of color in higher education, Black culture, the literature explaining the theory on forms of capital, and experiential learning theory.

Mentoring

This section provides a chronological view of selected pieces of literature on mentoring during the last three decades starting in the 1980s. For example, Klopff and Harrison (1981) view mentoring as a complex, growth-generating process in which mentors are competent people who serve as teachers, advisors, counselors, and sponsors for an associate, who may be younger and of the same or different sex. Klopff and Harrison go on to say that “the mentor and associate mutually gain insight, knowledge, and satisfaction from the relationship” (p. 42).

Henderson’s (1985) study found the primary functions of mentors to include: Teaching, guiding, advising, counseling, sponsoring, serving as a role model, motivating and protecting the protégé. Alleman’s (1986) study adds that the mentor is a person of

greater rank or expertise who serves as a teacher and guide helping a novice to develop in an organization or profession. Alleman also explains that the functions of mentoring to include: Giving information, providing political insight, challenging assignments, counseling, helping with career moves, developing trust, protecting, showcasing the mentee's achievements, and developing personal relationships.

On the other hand, East's (1987) dissertation focuses on mentoring relationships and views the most vital component of mentoring as the relationship developed between the mentor and the protégé. Although the context of the relationship may differ, that relationship must be a two way process of mutual affinity capitalizing on strengths.

A study by Blackwell (1989) describes mentoring "as a process by which persons of a superior rank, special achievements, and prestige instruct, counsel, guide and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégés" (p. 30). This article centers on diversity in academe. Blackwell explains that diversifying the composition of faculty members remains a priority but it still seems increasingly difficult to achieve. He suggests using a mentoring process as a tool for increasing the recruitment and retention of a diverse staff. The professionals can use their networks to help attract talented staff members and when they are hired they take a personal interest in their experience and work to ensure that they are happy and willing to stay at the institution.

In her article, Ardery (1990) explains that mentoring requires a teaching and learning process between the mentor and the mentee along with the transmission of knowledge. Her work supports the idea presented by Blackwell (1989) about the need

for one more knowledgeable individual who can teach and share wisdom in the mentoring relationship.

Jacobi (1991) presents a critical literature review on mentoring with a focus on the connection between mentoring and undergraduate academic success. The first section of the article reviews the different definitions provided about mentoring. Next, this author identifies three commonalities that the majority of the researchers shared about mentoring:

First researchers have concurred that mentoring relationships are focused on the growth and accomplishment of an individual and include several forms of assistance. Second, there is general consensus that a mentoring experience may include broad forms of support including assistance with professional and career development. Third, there continues to be agreement within the literature that mentoring relationships are personal and reciprocal. (p. 528)

The findings presented through Jacobi's review of the literature are congruent with the work published for the decade between the years 1981 to 1991. These shared commonalities describing the definition and purpose of mentoring have been explored by researchers such as Klopf and Harrison (1981), Henderson (1985), Alleman (1986), East (1987), and Blackwell (1989).

In their report Luna and Cullen (1995) discuss using faculty mentoring programs as a way to benefit the institution and improve the quality of higher education. They assert that

Whether mentoring is reviewed from a protégé's or a mentor's point of view, the concept of mentoring has been expressed as a history of relationships,

relationships that have fostered individual growth. These relationships may be long term, structured, formal, or planned. Or they may be spontaneous, short lived, or informal. (p. 5)

This quote speaks to the power of relationships and how those relationships can be used to initiate growth on the part of the mentor or mentee. It also provides insight into the length and duration of mentoring relationships and the different ways in which they can vary while still being productive. Stewart and Krueger (1996) reviewed 82 articles of existing literature in their article while they searched to find a definition for mentoring as it occurs in the nursing field. They found that many authors believe mentoring is a process- primarily concerned with transmitting knowledge. Their research revealed six essential attributes of mentoring in nursing to encompass: A teaching-learning process, reciprocal role, career development relationship, knowledge or competence differential between participants, duration of several years, and resonating phenomenon.

In his book, *The Manager as Coach and Mentor*, Parsloe (1995) describes the mentor as a wise and trusted counselor in the workplace. The mentor should have more power, authority, or experiences than the mentee. Sandler (1995) agrees with Parsloe and considers that the mentor should be the senior partner. The word “partner” is used to indicate that mentoring relationships should not be unidirectional. In addition Sandler supports the idea of having multiple mentors to help enhance the mentee’s experience.

Another study by Roberts (2000) contends that if you have experienced the essence of mentoring you will be able to formulate an explanation of what it means. After a thorough review of the literature, Roberts defines mentoring as “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 facilitate that persons' career and personal development" (p. 162). In other words, Roberts (2000) describes mentoring as a formal relationship between mentor and protégé.

In his article, Galbraith (2003) identifies a good mentor as showing respect for the mentee, having strong communication skills, and having the ability to motivate, encourage, and be developmental. Specifically, Galbraith suggests that "The primary goals of mentoring are directed toward enhancing personal and professional growth through the development of the learners self-concept and self-efficacy efforts" (p. 16). It becomes evident that Galbraith advocates for helping the protégé become independent and confident.

In their article on the benefits of mentoring in higher education, Girves, Gwathmey, & Zepeda (2005) identify mentoring as "a multidimensional, dynamic, reciprocal relationship between a more advanced practitioner and a novice" (p. 453). In that same work the authors also take a look at components of effective mentoring strategies in both traditional and alternative mentoring models. In his article Salinitri (2005) shares findings from a two-year study evaluating a formal mentoring program. Salinitri reports that mentoring is about creating an enduring and meaningful relationship with another person, with the focus on the quality of that relationship including factors such as mutual respect, willingness to learn from each other, and the use of interpersonal skills.

Crisp and Cruz (2009) conducted a more recent review that provided additional evidence to support the perceived ambiguity within the literature. These researchers found over 50 definitions for mentoring, varying in scope and breadth. They concluded that some researchers have used the term mentoring to describe a specific set of activities conducted by a “mentor” while other researchers have defined mentoring in terms of a concept or process. They noted that despite the confusion around the definition of the word “mentoring”, it remains a trusted resource, used and valued at multiple stages of the education spectrum.

Over the last five years there have been major shifts in the mentoring phenomenon involving electronic mentoring and the matching of mentors and mentees. For example, Murphy (2011) in her article takes a look at both e-mentoring and blended mentoring and shares how the advancement of technology has impacted mentoring:

It is important for students to learn how to manage their own developmental relationships early in their professional careers as individuals and employers increasingly use on-line tools, such as Linked-In, Twitter, and Facebook. It is also increasingly important that students learn how to initiate and develop professional relationships through electronic mediums. I argue that e-mentoring is one tool that may raise students’ awareness of the importance of mentoring relationships and begin to develop the skills necessary to build and sustain their developmental networks. Research has shown that e-mentoring leads to enhanced academic performance and job opportunities for students. (p. 608)

These are all electronic tools that serve similar purposes to those tools that have been traditionally used for developing mentoring relationships. The mentoring field will

continue to change and adapt as technology continues to advance and influence the way mentor and protégé relate and work together.

Due to the impact that mentoring has had on individuals, organizations started and have continued to implement formal mentoring programs as an attempt to replicate that success (Weinberg & Lankau, 2011). This puts an emphasis on the recruitment of mentors, the selection of mentors, and the matching of mentors and mentees in these formal programs. This process happens naturally in informal mentoring. Beard, Bayne, Crosby, and Muller (2011) speak on this topic in depth in their article, they suggest that:

...because the positive consequences of mentoring are not universal (Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001), a number of scholars (e.g., Downing, Crosby, & Blake-Beard, 2005) have sought to document the conditions under which mentoring has its greatest success. One condition that has been proposed by some researchers is matching mentor and mentee by race. (p. 623)

The literature suggests that the extent of mentoring that takes place in formal relationships may be less genuine than the experiences that occur in informal relationships (Weinberg & Lanka, 2011). Therefore, replicating that experience of informal mentoring as closely as possible should be a goal of most formal mentoring programs.

In reviewing the literature published about the topic, during the last three decades, it became evident that the discussions on mentoring and mentoring relationships have centered on aspects such as the different roles that mentors play and the characteristics that should be required for them to do a good job. The literature emphasizes that the mentor should be an individual who is more experienced and knowledgeable as to be able

to guide a novice individual to success. Another important aspect is the reciprocal nature of the mentoring relationship where it is expected that both participants (mentor and mentee) are able to learn and benefit from such relationship. Some authors are specific into suggesting the importance of matching the mentor and mentee according to race and gender. They also discuss the need for diversity and present it as beneficial for individuals and institutions. All in all, they explore the characteristics of good mentoring and each author presents different aspects that sometimes overlap in their findings. However, there is no consensus about a unified definition of what good mentoring should look like. This is due to the fact that mentoring is context bound and dependent on the field of expertise. Recently, with the impact of technology, mass media, and social media, a new trend for using technology to provide and participate in mentoring and mentoring programs has emerged.

Mentoring Types and Models

There are two primary forms of mentoring, formal mentoring programs and informal or naturally occurring mentoring. A natural mentor is someone who is not assigned through a formal mentoring program. As a case in point, Zey (1984) argues in his book *The Mentor Connection* that the most productive mentoring relationships exist when both mentor and protégé are allowed to choose each other freely. These relationships are not bound by the constraints of a formal mentoring program. In his thesis, Caruso (1990) asserts that natural or informal mentoring can be initiated by either the mentor or the protégé; his research shows that often the protégé will seek out the mentor with a view to satisfy perceived needs. This method helps the student to find a mentor who can provide him with help and direction in specific areas that he would like

to see growth happening. Furthermore, mentoring is often conceived as just being a dyadic relationship. Caruso's (1990) review of the literature found the existing work on mentoring included "225 conference papers, 150 doctoral dissertations and 65 books" (p. 14). Caruso states that a narrow focus upon one-to-one relationships is a potentially misleading way to examine mentoring and believes other alternative types of mentoring should be considered.

There is a contingent of researchers who highlight the importance of role modeling in mentoring. Rothera, Hawkins, & Hendry (1991) in their article, based on the role of the subject mentor and their ability to help further education, express that having a good role model is more important to the protégé than having a mentor who is in a position of authority. "Thus, a position of authority is not as important as the mentor being held in esteem, i.e. being a good role model" (p. 133). This quote provides support for recruiting good role models to serve as mentors regardless of their positions or titles. These types of role model based relationships tend to be more informal. Parsloe (1995) suggests that structured, formalized mentoring does not embody what the originators had in mind when they formed the classic mentoring relationship. These relationships were expected to be rich and meaningful unforced relationships. This applies to both professional and peer mentoring relationships. In her article, which looks at the influence of race on access to postsecondary education, Henriksen (1995) mentions that peer mentors provide the support systems necessary to improve campus climates for students. These peer relationships can be rich and meaningful as well given the close proximity of the students and the prospect of facing similar situations. She highlights the importance

of peer mentors especially for minority students since the absence of role models may make the path to higher education more difficult.

The type of mentoring can also vary depending on the context in which it is used. In their article on a faculty/student mentoring program, Campbell and Campbell (1997) approach mentoring from an organizational perspective and consider it as a set of behaviors in which experienced, more seasoned members of the organization provide guidance and support to less experienced employees to increase the likelihood that new employees become successful members of the organization.

About role modeling Vander Putten (1998) explores the experiences and perspectives of faculty of color on role modeling for students of color: "...role-modeling is more general, more pervasive and thus a more frequently-occurring activity than mentoring" (p. 8). This quote speaks to the prevalence of role modeling and how it happens more often than mentoring. Despite these findings there are some authors who have found downsides in role modeling. In her article, which takes a look at the effect of race on mentoring African American students, Lee (1999) explains that mentoring relationships can be either formal or informal and "the implementation of formal mentoring programs has become an institutionalized facet of university cultures across the country" (p. 32). This speaks to the emphasis that many place on formal mentoring programs. Lee (1999) also points out one major downside to role modeling. While role modeling is much less formal in structure, "the person serving as the role model can be completely unaware that someone is modeling his/her behavior" (p.32). This could lead to the admirer observing some behaviors from the role model that they should not desire to emulate. Mentoring, however, is intentional and generally has a recognizable structure

where the mentor is informed and prepared to show themselves in a positive light while helping the mentee.

In their paper, Philip and Hendry (2000) discuss adult mentors who work with younger mentees. They describe differing types of naturally occurring mentoring relationships adolescents and young adults may experience, in this discussion they include: Classic mentoring and peer-group mentoring much like the other authors listed in this chapter. They also talk about the concept of group mentoring. Group mentoring is a trend that has become increasingly popular it adds a different dynamic to the traditional one-on-one mentoring relationship and can help those institutions that struggle to obtain mentors. Group mentoring usually involves one mentor working with a group of mentees (Ambrose, 2003). The group shares experiences, challenges, and opportunities for the purpose of solving problems. Support for this group comes from peers and professional organization members as well (Darwin & Palmer, 2009). Though there are many reported advantages to mentoring circles the implementation of mentoring models outside of the traditional one to one dynamic is scarce.

Another important topic to highlight is coaching. The resurfacing of the role of coaching has recently become a hot topic in regards to mentoring and employee performance improvement and human resource development. Abiddin & Hassan (2010) define coaching as the support for learning job related skills which are provided by a colleague. This is accomplished through the use of observation; data collection; and descriptive reporting on behaviors and technical skills. These authors also go on to say that coaching is a strategy that mentors must learn and use effectively to increase their mentees skills.

In addition, Abiddin & Hassan (2010) introduce three different models. The counseling model uses counseling skills to enhance the achievements of the student. The competency based model has the mentor act as a systematic trainer who observes the trainee. There is also the Furlong and Maynard model where the mentor teaches the mentee through a series of overlapping events where mentoring strategies need to be matched to the students developmental needs, just to name a few. The best model for the situation should be chosen based on the mentees needs and the context of the program. As a case in point, O'Neil and Marsick (2009) implemented a peer mentoring model titled Action Learning Conversations. This model has three stages; framing/engaging, where the students address a complex challenge that they have been dealing with, advancing, which is the heart of the process consists of reflection and interpretation of these experiences on the part of the student, and lastly disengaging where everything is summarized after being processed and engaged through action. These stages are designed to help the students learn skills, gain knowledge, and deal with their feelings and develop their beliefs.

In an article focusing on mentoring and mentoring models in relation to faculty development, Sorcinelli and Yun (2007) look at four recent literary works which provide an overview of seminal models of mentoring and provide the framework for new mentoring programs. They noticed that each piece of work questioned the use of only traditional mentoring. This was especially true in one article that focused on multiple mentoring in academe (De Janasz & Sullivan, 2004) which argued "the traditional hierarchical model of a single, seasoned mentor is no longer realistic in an increasingly complex and changing academic environment" (p. 58). The other articles questioned the

use of traditional mentoring exclusively for different reasons. One author felt that due to the multiple components of academia that mentoring would be more beneficial if received from multiple sources and not just one mentor (Matthews, 2003). Another article that was reviewed viewed the impact of mentoring from a multicultural framework (Girves, Gwathmey, & Zepeda, 2005). These authors found the traditional mentoring model to not be inclusive to minorities and women. They suggest using a newer networking model.

There are notable mentoring models that are geared towards black men in Higher education; there is The Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB) which has over 186 chapters in the United States and abroad. It is a self-described dynamic organization established specifically to assist its participants to excel academically, socially, culturally, professionally, and in the community. It was founded by Dr. Tyrone Bledsoe in 1990. The Black Male initiative at Texas Southern University started in 1990. This program was formed as an effort to encourage Black youth in inner cities to enroll at colleges and universities and continue their education. This program focuses on interacting with successful role models to promote the value of education. The Bridge program at Georgia State University was created in the mid-1980s as a means of helping the transition to college for incoming students and to heighten and enrich the experience for African American students. Mentoring is a major component of the program, which provides an opportunity for students, faculty, and staff to engage in one-on-one relationships. The Faculty Mentor Program at the University of Louisville was created due to an increase in the amount of African American students enrolling at the university. This program proactively worked to build relationships between the students and the

faculty on campus (Brown, Davis, & McClendon, 1999; Cuyjet, 2006; Jacobi, 1991; LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997).

In summary, this section on mentoring types and models synthesizes the literature discussing the diverse scope of mentoring programs and the schools of thought they subscribe to. For example, there is a discussion on mentoring types to be split into two categories, formal mentoring and informal mentoring. Some authors explain that informal mentoring is more productive and usually protégé driven. Some authors asserts that formal mentoring programs may have a negative effect on the mentoring relationship by imposing artificial rapport that should occur naturally and as a result of shared affinity and values.

The literature highlights the need for other alternative types of mentoring, different than the one-to-one mentoring relationship and suggests group mentoring as an alternative to help institutions that have a shortage of mentors. Sometimes it is impossible to have one-to-one mentoring programs and multiple mentoring relationships may be a solution to this problem. Peer support systems are also discussed as they improve the campus climate for students.

Another aspect discussed in the literature is the meaning of role modeling in relationships with a protégé. The belief is that a protégé will benefit more from having a good role model than having a mentor who is in a position of authority or power but is not a good role model. In addition, the literature suggests that role modeling for students of color occurs more frequently than mentoring due to the shortage of mentors in formal programs. The literature also emphasizes the need for using a multicultural mentoring

framework that is more inclusive of minorities and women and that does not rely on the traditional mentoring models.

Mentoring Students of Color in Higher Education

In 1955 as a result of a lawsuit filed by Thelma White against Texas Western University (University of Texas at El Paso), Judge R.E. Thomason ruled that the entire University of Texas System must admit Blacks to its undergraduate programs. Eight years later in 1963, Texas A&M admitted its first Black students with Rice following in 1965. In 1963 Dana Smith, a Black female, won a landmark case against Southwest Texas State College (Texas State University), when Judge Rice signed the court order ending segregation at the institution (Charles, Holt, & Mayo, 2003).

According to Johnson (1989) in her book chapter, mentoring in higher education was first studied in 1911 by engineering faculty at the University of Michigan. She goes on to note that between 1990 and 2007, numerous attempts have been made to conceptualize mentoring within the context of higher education students. This continues to be a popular topic of research today. Each year the number of university implemented mentoring programs continue to increase, especially those at predominately white institutions, which focus on supporting minority students. Blackwell (1989) explains that minority students will have greater option in the selection of a mentor or of being chosen as a protégé if college and university officials increased the number of minorities employed in faculty positions. The institution where this research was conducted is committed to recruiting and retaining a more diverse student body, faculty, and staff. This should hopefully provide not only more students of color but also professionals to serve as mentors and resources for those students as they adjust to being at the university.

When students arrive on campus they immediately begin to experience the culture of the university. When explaining the idea of culture of institutions in their article Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1989) define culture as a pattern of basic assumptions-invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration. The amount of time needed for the student to understand the institutions culture and begin to work through it can vary from student to student. This can be a trying time, one that causes some student to rethink their decisions to attend the university. Mentoring can help to address this issue. Santovec (1992) concurs in his book *Building Diversity* and states that mentoring programs which incorporate “upper-division minority students involved in peer support and counseling-show positive retention results” (p. 5). This speaks to the getting students involved with mentoring as soon as they arrive on campus as a method to increase retention. Upperclassmen who have managed to stay at school and be successful can provide great support.

Efforts to retain minority students of color do not have to start at the collegiate level. The impacts can be seen at the high school level as well. Struchen and Porta (1997) in their article on role modeling and mentoring for African American youth state that mentoring, when combined with other social services, can influence the rate at which tenacious high school students from minority and low income families attend college, aspire to higher education, and begin college on schedule. Most authors cited or refer to the work of Dr. Woodrow Parker (2004) who stresses that

Any mentoring program for African American males should include; carefully selected mentors who are committed to the philosophy of the mentoring program

and who are dedicated to helping young African American males, a training model that includes elements such as responsibility, self- respect, moral development, awareness of role models, and spirituality, and the use of the group process as a major treatment procedure. (p. 362)

Mr. Parker does not think that successful mentoring for African American men happens by chance. He provides three steps that he deems very important and necessary. The first is the selection of the mentors. Without the right people in place who have bought into the program and who the students respect it will not be successful. The second component is the training model. It is centered on life skills which are very important and something that some participants may not get otherwise. The final component is use of the group process as a treatment process. The group can act as a safe space and allows the participant to be vulnerable and also help hold them accountable. Both of which are important for growth and development.

Following a similar line of thought regarding the careful selection of mentors, Leon, Dougherty and Maitland (1997) in their work *Mentoring Minorities in Higher Education* prefer that mentors and protégés be matched on similar characteristics, including race. According to these researchers, similarities serve as a foundation for developing effective communication and trust so that the relationship can be sustained over time. Race, a proxy measure for culture, is an important variable to facilitate the bond that should grow between the mentor and the protégé. However same race matches for mentors and protégés pose a problem at predominately white institutions where there is a lack of Black faculty to pair with Black students. In these instances some universities turn to peer mentoring to help fill the void. Brawer (1996) in his work on retention and

attrition in the 1990's supports the use of peer mentoring to develop social support networks among new students. Peers can play a large part in a student's support systems. The students are sharing the same experiences and can provide valuable insight to help each other be successful.

As mentioned earlier in this section, the culture of the institution can provide a challenge for students and especially those students of color. Heath (1998) notes in her chapter on African American students and self-concept development that African Americans on predominately white campuses are often victims of a clash of cultures- their own culture and the institutions culture. This issue can be compounded when dealing with young students who are still developing an understanding of their own culture. When referring to the topic of culture Lee (1999) points out African American students enter predominately white public institutions with a strong heritage that has evolved for centuries and that does not perfectly match those environments. While addressing the topic of culture it is important to not classify everyone into one group:

African Americans have many points of similarity, but there are also many points of difference within this culture. For example, it is true that African Americans share similar experiences of the effects of race across the country, but these experiences vary in severity of consequence among members, ranging from covert to overt actions. (p. 30)

Lee uses these examples to explain why he feels the conflict of African American students' culture with institutional culture at public universities, as well as the importance of faculty-student relationships, illuminates the potential benefits of mentoring. He also points out the need to not classify everyone into one group.

Promoting Academic Success

Students come to college to get an education so academic success is very important. Mentoring has been used as a tool to help students be successful in the classroom. There is a vast body of literature on the benefits of mentoring in higher education and the impact it has on academic achievement (Smith, 2007). Good, Halpin, and Halpin (2000) in their article speak of how “peer mentoring and tutoring gained popularity as an intervention over two decades ago” (p. 376). There are also academic benefits for traditional mentoring programs as well. Salinitri (2005) found that “typically, student mentoring programs match senior-level students or staff members with first-year students. Results from several studies on mentoring in higher education support the value of student-mentoring programs in assisting students with their adjustment to university, academic performance, and/or persistence decisions” (p. 858). Academic mentor programs transfer attitudes and behaviors that breed academic success to their participants (Philip & Hendry, 2000). If students are not successful academically then they cannot stay at school and will not graduate. Mentoring both with peers and with faculty and staff members helps to make sure this is not the case.

Adapting to College Life

This is an important process in every student’s life; the quicker they can adapt and get situated, the quicker they can start focusing on being academically successful. Tinto’s (1987) theory of student departure addresses student adaptation to campus life in three detailed stages. Mentoring is able to assist the student with each stage by providing them with resources. The first is “separation “and this stage is highlighted by the student separating from their previous communities and jumping into the college community.

University faculty and staff members serving in a mentor capacity experience and deal with this very often and are trained in some cases to help students with this (Astin, 1984). The second stage is transition; here the student passes between associations of the past and the hope for future associations. Peer mentors are great resources during this stage. These fellow students have either already had these experiences or are currently dealing with them and can share insight or can keep them from feeling alone as they experience things together (Brawer, 1996). The final stage is incorporation; this stage is where students seek to become socially and academically involved with faculty and students. This allows for both of those groups to help mentor the student and facilitate that incorporation.

Mentoring is a phenomenon that has been incredibly important to the growth and development of many people and in many facets. This section aimed to provide background information on mentoring, to show the variance of mentoring programs and their ability to adapt and mold to specific situations, and to show the universal support that mentoring receives. This remains a very important and ever evolving topic. Wallace, Abel, and Ropers-Huilman (2000) who research mentoring that students have received through the TRIO programs in their article suggest it is critical that researchers continue to add to the theoretical understanding by unpacking the ways in which mentoring is personally experienced and constructed by students.

In summary, this section on mentoring students of color in higher education presents best practices and potential challenges when providing mentoring relationships and programs for this group of students. One of the main topics discussed in the literature is the need to increase the number of minority faculty and staff working in

institutions of higher education so that students can have access to more mentoring opportunities. Another topic mentioned was the adjustment time necessary for the student to become familiar with the culture of the institution and at the same time reaffirm his own cultural roots. The literature also makes reference to the fact that successful mentoring for African American men needs to include three components: A specific process for the selection of mentors, a training model for the students that is based on life skills, and group support to provide accountability and encouragement. Mentoring can also assist with keeping this group of students enrolled. The literature shows that participation by upper class minority students (juniors and seniors) in peer mentoring programs has positive retention results. Peer mentoring and tutoring have been used as an academic intervention for students. The effects of mentoring can also impacts student's decisions to seek higher education. As shown in an article referenced in this section, mentoring can influence the rate at which minority and low income high school students attend college.

Brief Account of Black Culture

African American or Black culture in the United States is tied to the historical experience of the African American people. The culture has grown to be both unique and enormously influential to American culture as a whole. African American culture is rooted in the history and traditions established in Africa and although slavery greatly altered the ability of Americans of African descent to practice their cultural traditions, many practices, values, and beliefs survived and over time have modified or blended with other cultures (Lamotey, 1990). Black culture has grown to become a unique and dynamic culture that has a profound impact on mainstream American culture and the

culture of the broader world. Levine (1977) in his book *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* shares the historical viewpoint that:

The Africans brought to the English colonies as slaves in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries did not carry with them a network of beliefs, customs, institutions, and practices constituting what might be called with accuracy a unified “African” culture. No such monolithic cultural entity existed. The peoples of Africa created a myriad of languages, religions, customs, social, political, and economic institutions which differentiated them and gave them separate identities. (p. 3)

Therefore, it is safe to conclude that culture is a collage of many things (language, religions, customs, etc.), it is a process that evolves over time, and the family has a major impact on the perception of and actual culture. In their article which looks at the indigenous systems within the African American family Marbley and Rouson (2011) highlight that the majority of the research on African American family life has not been authored by African Americans. They argue that these authors may not fully understand their concept of Afrocentric worldview which they feel is a healthier lens through which to view the African American family. “Afrocentrism redefines the family and its functions from a Western/American idea of a nuclear family functioning for the survival of a society to one that encompasses an entire village” (p. 4). The authors feel that this phenomenon also helps to set the cultural tone for African Americans (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

The church has played a very significant role in the history and development of African American culture. Spirituality is viewed as one of the most important pieces of

the culture and should not be ignored in exploring their experiences (Hill, 1971; Milner, 2006). The role of the Black church was defined by Lincoln (1989) in his book titled *The Black church and Black self-determination* as:

The Black church in its historical role as lyceum, conservatory, social service center, political academy and financial institution, has been and is for Black America the mother of our culture, the champion of our freedom, the hallmark of our civilization. (p. 3)

This statement provides some context on the esteem that the church is held in by many in the African American community and the role that they feel it plays in terms of culture. Pattillo-McCoy (1998) shares a similar sentiment in her article on church culture and its use as a strategy of action in the Black community. She describes the church as the anchor of the African American community. It is a hub that serves the role of school, bank, political organization, party hall, and spiritual base. She also goes on to point out how it is one of the few institutions that is owned and operated by African Americans. Church networks offer informal support similar to that received from family and friends. These networks are worthy of further research especially among populations such as African Americans who show high religious involvement levels (Swain, 2008; Taylor, Lincoln, & Chatters, 2005).

In his article which highlights the culture of the kitchen, Jenkins (2011) provides a unique look to the topic of African American culture.

African American history has been situated within many types of “spaces”— farms, fields, churches, classrooms, courtrooms, juke joints, and homes. Both modest and grand, some have been places of pain. But many of these

environments have been spaces of love and cultural inclusion. They have often served as the venues through which the African American community has culturally raised its youth. And they have also been the places where cultural education took place when schools were either segregated or non-inclusive. (p.11)

He speaks to the strength and adaptability of African American culture and how it has been anchored by love. Regardless of the circumstances or location these important cultural lessons were given. What really stood out to me in his work was the way he used an African American cultural expression as an analogy.

The saying “you put your foot in it” is an African American cultural expression pertaining to excellence. When cooks put their foot in it, they have put every bit of who they are and every ounce of skill that they have into the meal. In other words, they have given us all they’ve got from head to toe. I appreciate this saying because I appreciate the ethic of excellence as a key component of African American culture. When we hear the word *culture*, the concepts that most readily come to mind are food, art, ritual, folklore, and spirituality. But, as my previous study discovers, contemporary generations of people of color are redefining culture in very complex and interesting ways. (p. 17)

He talks of a redefining of culture and what it exactly it details. He sees culture as becoming what we believe as well as what we do and what we produce which could completely changes the way the concept can be viewed.

The concept of Black culture is believed to play a major role when it comes to academics for Black students. Many African American students feel that in order to be successful academically they must reject their culture (Lamotey, 1990). In her book

Dreamkeepers, Ladson Billings (1994) deals directly with the topic of teaching for African American students and she shares that teaching culturally relevant pedagogy empowers students in many different ways with one of those ways being intellectually. This practice is not always put into use. As noted by Ford, Harris, Tyson, and Trotman (2001):

As school districts faced increasing ethnic and racial diversity (often attributable to immigration), educators resorted to increased reliance on standardized tests—biased standardized tests—which almost guaranteed low test scores for immigrants and culturally diverse groups who were unfamiliar with U.S. customs, traditions, values, norms, and language. As Gould (1995), Hilliard (1992), and others noted, the tests measured familiarity with American culture and English proficiency, not intelligence. (p. 53)

The rise of the standardized test took away the ability to structure the lessons to include culture and other components that appeal to different learning styles, particularly those of Black students.

The impact of culture can be seen at institutions of higher education as well. Lewis and Mckissic (2010) explore this in their article on student's participation in the Black campus community. They stress that the Black community is an under examined and neglected aspect of the undergraduate experience of Black students at predominantly White institutions even though other researchers have shown the importance it plays in students retention and matriculation (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, & Nichols, 2008; Strayhorn, 2010). The importance of culture also should be taken into consideration when conducting research at institutions. Culturally sensitive research approaches should be

used as a way to recognize ethnicity and place culture in a position that is central to the research (Tillman, 2002).

In summary this section on Black Culture provides a historical overview of the topic and a contextual view of the impact it has on Black male students in higher education. The research describes Black Culture as an evolving process that happens to be a collage of many different things which can range from ancient African traditions to components of popular American mainstream culture today. An important topic that was identified centers around the majority of the research on African American families being conducted by researchers who are not African American. There is concern that these researchers may not fully understand the Afrocentric view of these families. This view is an important part of setting the cultural tone. The importance of spirituality to Black Culture was mentioned very often in the literature. The Black church has played many roles that range from serving as a hospital, school, bank, and social hub. Its importance and versatility have led to many authors describing it as the anchor of the Black community. Researchers who have studied the Black church have found that the church network functions similarly to that of a family unit.

To sum up, the resiliency of Black Culture is highlighted in this section; Black Culture has existed and taken place in many spaces from its roots in Africa, through the slave trade and existence in subpar conditions to its current popularity in regards to music and fashion. Despite the culture becoming more widely accepted recently, it has been shown that Black students feel the need to reject their culture to be successful academically. Standardized testing is a great example of academics not working well with specific learning styles. Teaching culturally relevant pedagogy has been introduced

as a way to allow students to be successful and still express themselves and their culture. These educational issues of culture have impacts on the campuses of higher education institutions as well. Authors in this section inform us that the Black campus community is under examined and neglected in terms of research despite its documented importance to retention and matriculation.

Theory on Forms of Capital

During the last three decades the concept of social capital has been studied by scholars based on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam. For the purposes of this dissertation I focus attention on the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who had great interest in the ways society is reproduced and dominant classes retain their position and dictate the order of things (status quo). Bourdieu argues that the status quo and its reproduction cannot be explained only by economics and that cultural knowledge is a crucial element and plays a big role on how those in power retain their position. Therefore, Bourdieu's (1986) capital theory states that "capital is accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor" (p. 1). Capital includes the value of social networks, which Bourdieu showed could be used to produce or reproduce inequality:

capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of

educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility. (p. 3)

Institutions of higher education serve as hubs to economic, social, and cultural capital for students today. The college degree that the students earn will potentially allow them to make a larger salary and have more economic capital. The student will learn about themselves and their cultural capital. They will also learn about the culture of the institution. The networking that's done and the relationships made while in college can increase the student's social capital. A mentor is able to share experiences and tips that will hopefully make the adjustment process easier or more rewarding for the mentee while also exposing them to these differing sources of capital.

Bourdieu (1986) explains that capital in all forms takes time to accumulate and holds the potential capacity to produce profit. During this dissertation I will primarily focus on cultural capital and social capital. I chose to focus on these two because they are the ones that Black undergraduate male student are likely to encounter the most. Cultural capital is institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications. The students will obtain those by being at the institution so it is important that they are successful. Social capital is institutionalized in the form of titles of nobility. The students get involved with organizations and hold positions and offices while they are on campus, which provide them with titles of nobility. This really fit the design of the research and helped me make this decision to focus on these two areas specifically.

Cultural Capital

As stated earlier cultural capital is convertible under certain circumstances to economic capital and it is institutionalized as educational qualifications. Kalmijn and Kraaykamp (1996) in their article on race, cultural capital, and schooling describe Bourdieu's work with the concept of cultural capital as socialization into high-brow cultural activities, and the concept includes a variety of tastes and choices such as interest in art and music, theatres and museums, and literature. By gaining access to these events that are popularized by the upper class a person becomes socialized and gains cultural capital. Yosso's (2005) interpretation of Bourdieu's theory speaks to this point,

...cultural capital refers to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society. Bourdieu asserts that cultural capital, social capital, and economic capital can be acquired two ways, from ones family and/or through formal schooling. (p. 76)

The formal schooling that the students receive at the institutions of higher education provide them the opportunity to acquire capital. Lamont and Lareau (1988) focus on the original work of Bourdieu and Passeron in their essay and explain the concept of cultural capital and the role it plays in understanding the social stratification process. As you learn more about cultural capital it becomes easier to understand the divisions of the haves and have not's. You also learn ways to increase the cultural capital of the lower classes. According to Bourdieu (1986) cultural capital can exist in three forms:

In the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of

theories or critiques of these theories, problematic, etc.; and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee. (p. 243)

The embodied state of cultural capital refers to the physical being. The cultural capital declines and dies with the bearer. It cannot be passed instantly like currency or property can. The objectified state refers to cultural goods. The cultural capital can be transmitted by obtaining ownership of these goods. These pictures, books, or machines serve as symbols of cultural capital. In the institutionalized state cultural capital is the form of educational qualifications. Bourdieu (1986) concludes that the sheer nature of cultural capital makes it harder to identify than economic or social capital. Due to these differences,

it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence, as authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition, e.g., in the matrimonial market and in all the markets in which economic capital is not fully recognized, whether in matters of culture, with the great art collections or great culture foundations, or in social welfare, with the economy of generosity and the gift. (p. 245)

By the nature of cultural capital it is easy to be misunderstood. It is harder to recognize due to the various forms and what they each represent. In addition, Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) who wrote an article on race, cultural capital, and educational resources note that surprisingly little research has focused on racial and ethnic groups in regards to cultural capital and the attributes that impact it. Yosso (2005) points out the

implied assumption that people of color lack the social and cultural capital required for social mobility in her work on the Community Cultural Wealth. Morris (2004) explains in his article, black people shared their cultural capital with one another and developed their social capital for survival and success in a segregated world bounded by the omnipresent forces of racism and discrimination. However,

In highlighting the structural inequalities that adversely affect predominantly African American schools located in central cities, an unfortunate consequence has been the generic depiction of the schools and the educators who work in them as non-caring and academically deficient. These schools are seen as representing a form of retreat from Brown. They are depicted, together with African American people and culture, as inferior and deficit oriented. Such depictions provide a partial view of these schools and communities at the dawn of the 21st century. (p. 70)

In his article Strayhorn (2010) cites a number of other authors to show that African American youth more likely hail from low income families, are more likely to be at risk for dropping out of school, and less likely to have college educated parents. All of these factors impact the amount of cultural capital that they can expect to inherit or acquire. He notes that the situation is even bleaker for African American men. In his article, Franklin (2002) speaks about exploring the history of African American elementary, secondary, and higher education. He finds that

The use of cultural capital as a resource helps explain why these educational institutions were founded and supported by members of the local and national

black community. These schools, colleges, and universities were important for the advancement of African Americans collectively in the United States. (p. 177)

Perna (2000) researches the differences in the decision to attend college among African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites. She notes that members of the dominant class hold the most economically and symbolically valued kinds of cultural capital. Attending these institutions provide students the chance to be introduced to new forms of capital and in turn develop capital of their own.

Social Capital

During the college years students are often told to focus on their education; this, of course, is an important aspect of being a student but so are the connections and ties that students make with others. College should be the perfect opportunity for students to acquire and further develop social capital. Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as

the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition- or in other words, to membership in a group- which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (p. 249)

The more people in your network the broader your influence of social capital is.

Membership in groups provides you access to the collectively owned capital of the whole group. This is important to this study because as minorities often hear phrases like it is not what you know, it is who you know and you have to work twice as hard to be successful as a minority. Improving the social capital of minority students can potentially

help to even the playing field. It can also help to retain students of color and help them graduate. Unlike cultural capital where Bourdieu's work is widely accepted as the standard, there are other studies in the area of social capital that are well revered and widely studied. The most significant is likely that of Coleman. His work primarily focuses on social capital as it is related to children.

Coleman (1988) explains that "social capital is defined by its function. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible" (p. 98). In her article, Morrow (1999) compared and contrasted the work of Bourdieu, Putnam, and Coleman on social capital and describes Coleman's concept as a resource derived from people's social ties. In addition, Stewart (2003) identifies Coleman's assumption about the key to social capital as being actions of self-interest made at the individual level. I chose Bourdieu's definition for my research because, it provides a more complex and contextualized account of different forms of capital. Bourdieu (1986) writes:

The existence of a network of connections is not a natural given. It is the product of an endless effort at institution, of which institution rites- often wrongly described as rites of passage- mark the essential moments and which is necessary in order to produce and reproduce lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits. (p. 250)

This speaks to the work that is needed on the part of the student and the institution to make sure that the students have opportunities to get connected with other through extracurricular activities and class study groups. Portes (1998) highlights that the most common function attributed to social capital is as a source of network-mediated benefits

that extend beyond the immediate family. He feels that this definition came closest to that of Bourdieu.

In their work Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau (2003) notice the recent rise to prominence of the concept. They feel social capital has been plagued by conceptual murkiness. “The foundational statements in the social capital literature – primarily those of Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1986) - were relatively brief and imprecise, leaving subsequent researchers free to develop discrepant meanings of the same term” (p. 321). Lin (1999) however suggests that issues such as this are to be expected when the term is used to refer to a variety of features in the social structure such as community norms, group solidarity, and civil organization participation according to different scholars.

The explanation of social capital as access to institutional resources has its roots in the work of Bourdieu (Dika & Singh, 2002). With my research being conducted at and focusing on an institution of higher education Bourdieu’s approach to the concept was very fitting. His approach to the concept is likely the most theoretically useful and sophisticated attempt to deal with the issue from a community development perspective (DeFilippis, 2001). The wide scope of social capital and its multiple definitions have helped it to become arguably one of the most successful exports from sociology to other social sciences and public discourse (Portes, 2000). The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent depends on the size of the network of connections they can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural, or symbolic) possessed in their own right by each of those to whom the agent is connected (Bourdieu, 1986). Once the social capital is obtained it can be reproduced.

Bourdieu (1986) goes on to note that the reproduction of social capital presupposes an unceasing effort of sociability and a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed.

This is one of the factors which explain why the profitability of this labor of accumulating and maintaining social capital rises in proportion to the size of the capital, because the social capital accruing from a relationship is that much greater, to the extent that the person who is the object of it is richly endowed with capital. (p. 251)

This rich endowment of capital is not available to everyone. It takes social capital to earn more social capital. It is not a process where you can go from little capital to abundance instantly. It is a process of accumulation. Group membership does help this happen faster.

Gonzalez, Stoner, and Jovel (2003) in their research address the issue that underrepresented students usually arrive at college with less access to informal or formal social networks, thus limiting their social capital. These networks also may serve as conduits for college opportunities. Social capital tends to be lower for children in single family households as they lack a second at home parent and they move more often which prevents them from establishing social ties in their neighborhood. Social capital is greatest in two parent families with few children and where the parents encourage the children to be successful (Portes, 1998).

Furstenberg and Hughes (1995) suggest that “access to social capital might account for within group differences as well as explaining, at least in part, why children growing up in particular families or certain communities are more likely to find their way

out of disadvantaged circumstances.” (p. 582) Stanton-Salazar (1997) shares a similar sentiment in his work:

The role that social networks play in society is far more complex. While they function primarily as conduits for transmitting the effects of socioeconomic background, race, and gender, they may also function as lifelines to resources that permit low-status individuals to overcome social structural barriers and to experience healthy human development, school achievement, and social mobility. (p. 5)

This shows the power of social capital and why Black undergraduate students having access to it is so important and one of the focal points of this research. Perna and Titus (2005) explain that the Bourdieu approach predicts that the relationship between parental involvement with social capital and college enrollment differ based on ethnic/racial groups. Mentoring can be used as a tool to help offset this and other differences which vary among ethnic groups. There are researchers who feel that social capital is eroding in the United States so it is important to embrace this concept and work to strengthen those social networks (Putnam, 2000; Pyles & Cross, 2008).

Navigational Capital

Cultural and social capitals are both very important tools for students as they spend their time at their institution. The ultimate goal for these students is to graduate. In order to do so they must successfully navigate through the university. The work of Yosso (2005) addresses this with the introduction of the community cultural wealth concept. This is a theory where six forms of capital encompass and make up the community cultural wealth. She identifies that Bourdieu’s cultural capital concept has

been used by some to show a deficit for students of color when compared to their white middle class counterparts. She counters these deficit views by identifying forms of capital that are possessed by marginalized groups and that traditional cultural capital theory does not recognize. One of the forms of capitals Yosso introduces is navigational capital. She defines “navigational capital” as “the skills of maneuvering through social institutions” (p. 80). These institutions traditionally were not created with communities of color in mind. Oropeza, Varghese, & Kanno (2010) later note the need for the individual to possess inner strength and a strong social network to help them overcome the potentially hostile environment. As a case in point, Palmer and Gasman (2008) point out that HBCU’s are rich in social capital. They mention how the concept of developing navigational capital is positively related to the students’ academic success.

Experiential Learning Theory

The origin of experiential learning theory can be traced back to the work of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget. Experiential learning theory highlights the role that experience plays in the acquisition of knowledge. More specifically, Kolb (1984) explains that, “learning is a continuous process grounded in experience. Knowledge is continuously derived and tested out in the experiences of the learner” (p. 27). David Kolb is regarded as one of the most influential writers on the subject of experiential learning. There have been over 1,500 studies, articles, and papers conducted on the work of David Kolb over the past forty years (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kayes, 2002). For example, Beard and Wilson (2006) write:

Learning from experience is one of the most fundamental and natural means of learning available to anyone. It need not be expensive, nor does it require vast

amounts of technological hardware and software to support the learning process instead, in the majority of cases, all it requires is the opportunity to reflect and think. (p. 15)

Reflection is a very important element in transforming experiences into learning. As a matter of fact, Kolb and Kolb (2005) explain that experiential learning is often misunderstood as the learning that happens mindlessly as a result of experiences or as tools and techniques that can provide experiences for learners. Kolb (1984) goes on to define experiential learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (p. 41).

Kolb (1984) developed a holistic model of experiential learning consisting of six fundamental propositions that can be summarized as follows:

Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes. Learners should be engaged in the learning process. Their feedback is vital to the learning that is taking place. All learning is relearning. Learners use their own experiences, opinions, and beliefs regarding a topic. These are tested and integrated into new learning and a help to develop a new understanding. Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world. These conflicts are what drive the learning process. By examining and accepting these conflicts, learners gain a new understanding. In the process of learning you move back and forth between opposing modes of reflection and action and feeling and thinking. Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world. Learning is not just cognition, but rather immersion into

the subject. It involves the complete function of the whole person's ability to think, feel, perceive and behave. Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment. The learner combines new experiences with what they have already learned in the past. The way we handle the possibilities of each new experience dictates the range of choices and decisions we see. The choices and decisions we make to some extent determine the events we live through. Learning is the process of creating knowledge. By experiencing knowledge the learner creates new knowledge. We learn through our experiences and those experiences create knowledge. Experiential learning depends heavily on social interactions which provide the experiences that serve as building blocks for the construction of knowledge. These social interactions can vary based on various issues.

This dissertation focuses on undergraduate Black males so we will focus on issues that commonly affect members of that ethnicity. Ethnicity shapes what parents do, what children have, how children and adults spend their time, and the types of exchanges between family members. For even basic caregiving activities, such as soothing a baby, there are characteristic differences in the strategies used in different ethnic groups (McAdoo, 1997). According to Arthur and Achenbach (2002) experiential learning can be used to raise awareness about multicultural or ethnic issues. For minority cultures living within a dominant majority culture, the childrearing goals and socialization practices can become even more complicated, particularly if the minority culture is subjected to discrimination (McLoyd, 1999). According to Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, and Coll (2001) the research on economic status indicates that economic hardship

(poverty) means less access to certain material goods and services, less access to potentially enhancing experiences, and greater exposure to potentially debilitating substances and experiences.

Boykin and Toms (1985) specified that for African Americans, families must teach their children to deal with three different realms of experience: mainstream American, African American cultural heritage, and the oppressed experience of people of color. McAdoo (1992) writes that black parents must prepare their children to function in both a Black and a White arena. Parents, through their overt and covert behaviors, attempt to help their children become prepared for their positions in this duality of Black existence. "This is no easy task, for the very values that permeate the wider society are, for the most part, detrimental to the development of their positive self-esteem, ethnic identity, and achievement in school" (p. 6). The impact of ethnicity plays an important role on cognitive development and it is important to note how it can impact the experiences of students in a positive or negative way. It will be interesting to see how the students perceive their ethnicity to impact their experience and education in this environment. All of the information provided serves as the foundation for this dissertation which focuses on the mentoring experiences of undergraduate Black males.

CHAPTER III

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

The present qualitative case study documents the mentoring relationships and collegiate experiences of eight undergraduate Black males as well as their self-reported participation and access to mentoring. This dissertation is qualitative by nature because, as many authors explain (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2011), qualitative research takes the researcher into the field and is based on interaction with the participants. The researcher is the primary instrument for both data collection and data analysis. The focus of the research is on creating meaning and understanding of how people describe their experiences and the meaning they attribute to these experiences. Specifically, Yin (2003) identifies five features of qualitative research:

...Involves studying the meaning of people's lives, under real world conditions...Aims to represent the views and the perspectives of the research participants...Covers the contextual conditions -social, institutional, environmental- of people's lives...Aims to explain human behavior through existing or emerging concepts offering new insights... Uses multiple sources of evidence and triangulates data from these different sources in order to add credibility and trustworthiness to the study. (pp. 7-9)

The main goal of this dissertation was to document and report on the complex stories of undergraduate Black men in reference to their mentoring experiences. As Patton (2002) explains, this type of methodology allows for a flexible design and collection of field-based data, in this case individual interviews and group interviews with the eight study participants were used. In addition, Merriam (2009) explains that “the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive” (p. 14). As the researcher, I wanted to learn how mentoring has impacted these undergraduate Black men; for that purpose, it made sense to collect their stories and listen to their point of view about mentoring to gain a deeper understanding about their experiences and journey. The research questions that guided the study included: What are the mentoring relationships and collegiate experiences of eight undergraduate Black males as well as their self-reported participation and access to mentoring?

1. What does mentoring look like for undergraduate Black males?
2. What are their perceptions of mentoring relationships?
3. How do these mentoring relationships impact their collegiate experience?

Researcher's Roles

As a researcher in this project I played a number of roles, researcher, learner, and professional. The first and most prominent role was that of researcher. In this role I was responsible for collecting data, analyzing them, and reporting findings. This role is one that was near and dear to my heart due to the subject matter and my desire to learn more about mentoring relationships through research. Merriam (2009) describes the interests of qualitative researchers as understanding people's experiences and how they interpret

them, finding out how people's worlds are constructed, and what meaning people attribute to their experiences.

Another role that I played was that of a learner (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). As mentioned before I have eight years of experience working as a mentor at the university level; however, I was aware that there was still a lot to be learned. I conducted this research to address gaps in the existing literature and learn ways that we can help undergraduate Black males have better experiences. Though this was my focal point I was aware that other themes or ideas could emerge as a result of the research. I was eager to learn and become a better resource for the undergraduate Black male students I work with.

Finally, I also played the role of the researcher as a professional; as a professional staff member in a Student Affairs Department my role is to create a safe atmosphere for our students to develop and enjoy a co-curricular experience that helps them become well rounded citizens when they depart our campus. Upon completion of the research study my goal is to share the research findings with other professionals in student affairs. I am aware there is room for improvement in the work we do serving students.

Study Setting

The institution where the research took place has recently been classified as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). As of the spring 2011 semester there were 14,193 male students and 18,379 female students enrolled in courses at the university. The cultural diversity of the males in the student body is 64.4% White, 23.6% Hispanic, and 6.1% Black. These numbers are very important as they tie into the University strategic plan goal 5: Enrich our learning and working environment by attracting and supporting a

more diverse faculty, staff, and student body. It is important that the university works to increase these numbers to avoid the national trends of the declining male enrollment. Due to the rising number of Hispanic students we have in our country the number of Hispanic Serving Institutions is sure to increase. Hispanics constituted 16.7 percent of the U.S. population in 2011 according to the U.S census and that number is projected to rise to 22 percent by the year 2015. This coincides with Hispanics becoming the majority minority in the United States. At this large four-year Hispanic Serving Institution in central Texas, the undergraduate population accounts for 84 percent of the enrollment, graduate students 14 percent, and post baccalaureates 2 percent. Within these numbers, minority students make up 35 percent of the population. Of this number 25 percent are Hispanic, 6 percent are Black, and 4 percent classify as other.

Research Participants

For this study the research group consisted of 8 undergraduate Black male students (see Table 3.1). 6 of the 8 participants were academically classified as seniors and two were in their junior year. Merriam (2009) states that “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 77). Therefore, I contacted students that were participating in mentoring programs on campus and who met the criteria for the research. Patton (2002) refers to this type of sample as criterion sampling and suggests selecting information rich cases for study at depth. In order to secure this type of research sample I created an e-mail which asked the coordinators of the mentoring programs on campus who worked directly with Black males to nominate some students that they felt would provide good insight for the

research and who could also gain from participating in the discussions. I e-mailed all of the students who had been recommended and provided them information about the research and inviting them to participate. Once I began to hear back from the students I selected the first eight respondents who met the participation criteria. I asked each of them to meet with me so that we could go over the expectations of their participation and so that I could answer any questions that they had prior to signing the consent form.

Merriam (2009) states that determining the “...selection *criteria* are essential in choosing the people or sites to be studied. The criteria established for purposeful sampling directly reflect the purpose of the study and the identification of information-rich cases” (p. 77-78). Thus, for the present study, the main requirements were; (a) participate as a mentee with the Vice President for Student Affairs office which houses the mentoring program, (b) be identified as a mentee by a faculty or staff member, and or (c) participate in the African American Male Dialogue Series that occurs monthly on campus. The students selected for the research study had documented experiences with mentoring. This ensured the participants would have information rich stories that helped to advance the research.

Table 3.1 Study Participants

Pseudonym	Academic Classification
David	Senior
Dominique	Senior
Deion	Senior
Kenneth	Junior
Jeffrey	Senior
Camden	Senior
Jordan	Junior
Christopher	Senior

Table 3.1 provides a list of the study participants. They comprise a very unique group of students with very diverse experiences. David is a student in his senior year of school. He is the president of his historically Black fraternity chapter and he is viewed as a leader on campus. He is really focused on helping others be successful. Dominique is a senior as well. His involvement has been limited primarily to one student organization but he is known by many students on campus. Though he has been described by many as a class clown, he is a close friend and confidant to some of the most influential student leaders on campus. Deion is a senior as well. He is viewed by many students, faculty, and staff as the go to student leader on campus. He has an extensive list of organizations and projects he has been involved with. He is selfless and always looking for ways to share the information he gains with other students. Kenneth is in his junior year. He transferred from a HBCU where he was a student athlete. The adjustment both academically and socially was difficult initially but now he has become one of the more popular students on campus. Jeffrey is a senior who will most likely be the first of the participants to graduate. He is very involved as a student employee at the university. He recently returned from studying abroad and that trip really opened his eyes to some things and changed his perspective. Camden is a senior who has been heavily involved on campus. He was recently elected the president of his historically Black fraternity chapter. He has made a conscious effort to branch out and not limit himself to just being active in the Black community on campus. Jordan is a junior who has been heavily involved with one organization. He has risen through the ranks and now serves in a leadership role. He is often described by others as being genuine and a real good guy. Christopher is in his

senior year. He transferred to the institution after spending his first two years at a community college. He has worked to pay his own way through college. This has limited his involvement on campus until recently when he helped charter a Christian based fraternity on campus. Christopher is very mature for his age and highly respected by students, faculty, and staff.

Data Collection Procedures

The literature explains that qualitative data can be generated using a variety of methods such as observation, interviews, artifacts, and documents (Charmaz, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). In the study, data collection sources included: interviews, artifacts, a focus group, and field notes. In a case study the researcher investigates a particular instance that has occurred to an intrinsically bound group (Merriam, 2009); in this case the mentoring experiences of eight undergraduate Black men. According to Yin (2003) a case study design should be considered when the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions that are relevant to the phenomenon. Therefore, this research focuses on mentoring experiences within a University where Black students graduate at a rate that is equal to or higher than their White counterparts (Carey, 2008). As explained by Yin (2003) a single case study (the mentoring experience at one 4 year university) with embedded units (eight undergraduate Black males) allows for the acknowledgement of similarities and differences in the participants and their mentoring experiences.

Interviews

Drawing on ethnographic interview procedures, I interviewed each of the study participants twice and these interviews lasted from one to two hours (see appendix B for sample interview questions). The follow up interviews ranged from 15 to 30 minutes and

served as a chance to ask clarification questions to the participants after the initial analysis of the data. Interviews, as described by Charmaz (2006) give the researcher “an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience” (p. 35). Also ethnographic interviews aim to collect detailed narratives that capture the whole picture of how participants describe and make sense of their world (Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 2010; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Weiss, 1994). To this effect, Fetterman (2010) states that the informal interview is the most common type of interview technique in ethnographic research; in other words, in this type of interview there is not a specific order in the questions formulated to study participants. These interviews are structured as conversations and dialogue with the participants to be flexible enough as to allow them to share any stories they feel are relevant to the topic at hand. The interviews with the participants allowed me to build rapport with them so that they felt more comfortable sharing their stories and experiences as college students involved in mentoring programs.

Even though I had a set of questions prepared ahead of time, I was aware of the need of being a good listener. For example, I did not stop students when they provided information or answers to questions that I did not ask. Sometimes I did not have to ask some of the questions on my list because they were not relevant or because the participants provided that information while answering another question. Once the interviews were completed I listened to the recordings again to help me identify further things to explore during the follow up interviews. These interviews were in the form of continual conversation. They picked up where the initial interviews left off so that the participants did not feel as if they were starting over with a completely different interview. The majority of the interviews took place in a comfortable lobby space

located right outside of my office. One interview was conducted in a study room located in the university library.

Artifacts

Merriam (2009) defines artifacts as physical objects found within the study setting. She explains that “Anthropologists typically refer to these objects as artifacts, which include the tools, implements, utensils, and instruments of everyday living” (p. 146). These are items distinguished from records and official documents. In the study, and as presented in the next chapter, artifacts provide further insight and meaning into the mentoring experiences of the students. The artifacts provided by the participants include: A picture with people participating in a student organization, an internship badge, a picture of a fraternity symbol, a trophy, an award plaque, a high school sign, a backpack with a fraternity shield, and the Argentinean flag. Requesting the study participants to bring artifacts to the interviews and having them about the memories associated with these objects was a useful strategy to help them trigger memories and tell stories related to mentoring (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Each student was instructed to bring an artifact or object that reminded them of mentoring or a mentoring relationship to their individual interview. Doing this gave the participants time to choose the artifact and I could take pictures of them just in case they forgot to bring them to the focus group. We did not discuss the artifact during the individual interview because I wanted to use them as an icebreaker activity to start the focus group session. Therefore, each student shared the story associated with their artifact at the beginning of the focus group meeting and served as a bonding experience for the participants. The artifacts as illustrated in the next chapter also serve as a way to help the reader identify with each participant by providing

a mental image for them to have as they continue reading the remainder of the dissertation document.

Focus Group

A two-hour focus group session served as another data source to gain understanding of the participants' experiences as related to mentoring; six of the eight study participants attended the focus group session. In a focus group the participants have the opportunity to listen to each other's opinions and attitudes about the same topic and re-examine their views in light of other people's point of view (Hyden & Bulow, 2003). Bryman (2004) describes this approach as allowing the researcher the opportunity to identify how group members collectively make sense of a topic and construct meaning around it. In this case the participants had the opportunity to discuss the meaning of "mentoring" and exchange ideas about their access and participation of mentoring programs in and outside of campus. Focus group interviews allow the researcher to not only center on what is said by the participants but on how they said it (Curtis & Redmond, 2009; Patton 2002) allowing the researcher to take into account the passion and feelings of the participants as it relates to their responses. Thus, I invited two colleagues to help taking notes in their laptops about the nonverbal and verbal participation of the six students who attended the focus group session. We met before the focus group to agree on the process of note taking and to discuss what to observe. We also met after the session was over to debrief on the experience and give me the opportunity to ask questions. Having these two colleagues' help during the focus group session allowed me to center my attention on listening and following up on the information that the participants were volunteering (see Appendix C).

Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, and Robson (2001) and Massey (2011) appreciate the focus group ability to gauge the usually unspoken social norms, expectations, and cultural exchanges taking place due to the depth of analysis and conversation. Likewise, during the first 30 minutes of the focus group session the participants and I shared food and talked about topics that seemed to be unrelated such as sports and this interaction served as an icebreaker and segue into the group interview. The artifacts were also very helpful to set the tone for starting the group interview. The participants and I took turns explaining the connection between the artifact and our mentoring experiences; this in turn allowed for reflection and interaction among participants. Since the six participants already knew each other from their participation in mentoring programs on campus, being friends, and in one case being roommates they seemed to feel comfortable sharing ideas and trusting that their opinion was being respected and it was a safe environment to talk about the topic. Also, as a result of this interaction one of them sought me out to serve as a mentor that he could visit and consult with as needed.

Field Notes

Field notes, as the name describes, are notes taken while in the field, however they are more than simple observations of people, places, activities, events, and conversations (Glesne, 2011). The field notes contain detailed accounts of the physical location, time, who was involved, and interactions that occurred (Patton, 2002). They offer an opportunity to provide background information and account for other methods of communication such as non-verbal and body language. In the context of this research project I took notes after the interviews, when the memories of the events were still fresh in my mind. As I explained before, another set of field notes come from the focus group

and were taken by two colleagues who were present during the focus group session. While I did not get to take notes directly during the focus group while I was serving as the moderator the session was audio and video recorded. When I watched the video I paid attention to the notes that my colleagues had taken and I made new notes of my own. The notes were pivotal as I began to put the stories of the participants into narrative form for the following chapters. They were a good resource that helped provide clarity when listening to the audio or reading over the transcription and coming across statements that may have caused me to have questions or concerns.

Data Analysis

Analyzing data is an on-going and nonlinear process (Merriam, 2009, Patton, 2002). For this research project the data were reviewed and analyzed as they came. Merriam (2009) describes this process as ideal in conducting qualitative research; it helps to avoid the potential of being overwhelmed by massive amounts of data if one were to wait until all of the data were collected to analyze it. I used the process of memoing to ensure that ideas that I had during early data analysis were not lost and made its way into the final product. I also color coded chunks of data that later served to support detailed description and provide verbatim answers offered by the participants in the process of writing up study findings (Fetterman, 2010).

Due to the nature of the research, narrative analysis guided the overall data analysis process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to Creswell (2007) this method is helpful when analyzing data collected through stories, accounts of individual experiences, and also deciphering the meaning of those life experiences the participants share. After all, narrative is the primary way human beings use to make sense of the

world and order their experiences (Worth, 2008). As a novice researcher this type of data analysis was very useful and it provided a systematic method of analysis. It also provided an opportunity to reacquaint myself with all of the data that I had collected over the course of the research project.

Once the data were transcribed I carefully read each entry and began to segment the data; (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). For the initial analysis, assembling and disassembling the data, I followed the steps described by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) when conducting narrative analysis. These steps are: 1. Get to know the data (get immersed in the data and start selecting crucial pieces of data); 2. Focus the analysis (keeping in mind the study research questions and the theoretical framework); 3. Categorize information (coding data and looking for emergent categories); 4. Identify connections between and within categories (revise codes and categories to make sure they are accurate; and 5. Interpret or bring it all together.

When the segments were meaningful I coded them using inductive coding to develop the codes myself and tailor them specifically for the study theoretical framework. Then, I posted the main research questions on the wall in front of my desk to keep focused and organized. Next, I disassembled the data and put pieces of data under each question to start writing up the narratives that were going to help me provide answers to the research questions. Thus the participants' profiles emerged as composed by two main sections, their personal and familial background and their experiences and perceptions of mentoring. The next step was to repeat the process this time using the categories provided by the research framework (different forms of capitals and experiential learning) to determine what was data and what was noise (Merriam, 2009).

In using narrative analysis I presented the findings by using direct quotes and vignettes with students' responses. It was my job as the researcher to primarily listen to what the students were saying and use their voice to present the findings which Connelly and Clandinin (2000) emphasize will add rigor to the research. One of the challenges I faced was deciding the form of capital (e.g., social capital, cultural capital, navigational capital) where the narrative best belonged; at times, it was hard to differentiate the capitals since the examples provided by the participants overlapped and could fit under multiple categories. When this happened I returned to the data and looked at the participant's narrative again to ensure that I was using it as the student shared it in his interview and not how I had constructed it or wanted it to fit. Thayer (2000) describes this process as:

There is even more onus on the researcher to articulate transparently how s/he gathered and analyzed the data. The narrative interview, a major way of gathering verbal narratives, may bear resemblance to broader definitions of semi-structured and unstructured interviews or it may be viewed as a collaborative activity, one in which the researcher shares the impact on her/him of the stories that are being told. (p. 5)

I was extremely mindful of this as I analyzed the data so that the findings reported would be the stories of the participant and as accurate as possible.

I also used a journal as a tool to help analyze the data. I recorded ideas, developments, and reflections on the research implementation and happenings (Glesne, 2011). This resource was very helpful for identifying patterns and trends that were consistent throughout the research collection process. This journal was housed in both a

physical notebook and as a computer file and I reflected in writing about underlying issues or concerns that could be addressed with each participant in the individual interviews as follow up questions. This journal allowed me to gauge my feelings as I moved through the research process and helped to ensure that my opinions and biases were minimized and not impacting the research. It also helped me realize when I rushed to the next step instead of remaining reflective.

Building Trustworthiness

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) emphasize the importance of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability in qualitative research in order to account for the rigor of the research. Credibility speaks to the rigor and systematic planning and implementation of the study. This can be reflected through the quality and accuracy of the data used to report findings. Credibility of research findings is accomplished by prolonged engagement with the participants that is “the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). In this study, credibility is established by the amount of time spent during the interviews and focus group. This led to the rich data that emerged from the participants stories. Denzin and Lincoln provide a list of questions helpful in establishing credibility. A few of these questions are: (a) are the data sufficient to merit the researcher’s claim? (b) are there strong logical links between the gathered data and the research’s argument and analysis? and (c) has the researcher made systematic comparisons between observations and between categories? I was mindful of these questions when reporting my research findings. I provided data for each theme that emerged and I used data from multiple data sources. In addition, credibility was further established by member checking, which

allows the study participants to provide input on the reporting of the data collected (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). This was done during the follow up interviews where the data collected were shared with participants and I asked clarification questions. I also asked them to expand on some of the stories they shared to gain important details so that I could tell their full story.

Merriam (2009) describes transferability as the ability to apply study findings to other similar situations and settings. This is accomplished in the current research study by providing rich and detailed information from the study for the readers to dissect and digest. The study also draws recommendations for practice as well as offering a mentoring model for best practices based on the research findings. Finally, dependability and confirmability are the measure of efforts made to ensure the study findings are supported by the data collected and the results depict the participants' reality, and not the predispositions and beliefs of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data from the participants is portrayed through direct quotations. For the present study verbatim quotes from the participants were used to bring life to their stories and assist in illustrating with detail the experiences they have had with mentoring and what they learned from them. However, conversational spacers and false starts like *you know* or *uh* used in order to cover a pause while the participant was searching for a word or gathering his thoughts to continue were omitted

Ethical Issues

Ensuring proper ethical practice and participant confidentiality is of the utmost importance to me. I followed the proper requirements and applied for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. I was approved to conduct the research shortly thereafter.

I used the appropriate consent forms (See Appendix D) with study participants so that they understood the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and expectations for participation. The consent form was reviewed to make sure that it provided a proper description of the project; it let the participants know about the voluntary nature of the project; and they understood they were giving me permission to use the data for research purposes. In order to protect their identity I assigned pseudonyms. Another measure to protect their identity was to omit too specific details when reporting the stories they told such as names of places, institutions they attended, and names of people that they have had as mentors. Data was kept in a safe place and locked in a drawer cabinet where I was the only one with access to it.

Significance of the Research

Sharing and analyzing the stories of the research participants benefits other Black males by showing that they are not alone in their experiences and by providing information that has been successful for other students and can possibly be adapted for their use. The advice and assistance shared and passed from mentor to mentee in some cases is made available to a larger group to be utilized. This study sheds light on the importance of navigational capital, social capital, and cultural capital to the collegiate experience of this group of undergraduate Black males.

This study provides information that is important for the practice of educators, student affairs professionals, and others who operate in and around the sphere of higher education. The retention and graduation rates for Black men across the board are low and have shown little progress in recent years. This study highlights the practices used by an institution that is successful at retaining their Black men at a higher rate than their white

counterparts and this is extremely rare. This research shows the impact of the methods being used to achieve this goal. The findings can be used to help implement these methods on a larger scale if they are already in use or provide a template for establishment at other institutions.

Chapter Summary

The present chapter provides a detailed description of the overall research study design. The data collection and analysis processes are highlighted to provide the reader with a greater understanding of the project; the researcher, the setting, and the participants. The methods I used to collect data are identified and the steps I took to analyze the data were laid out. I also present the steps I followed in building trustworthiness and the considerations that were taken for implementing ethical research. This was all done in order to prepare the reader for the information that will appear in the subsequent chapters. The following chapter provides a detailed profile of research participants and begins to provide answers to the research questions.

CHAPTER IV

STUDY PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTION OF MENTORING

This chapter provides the profiles of the eight undergraduate Black men who participated in the study. The focus is to elucidate what mentoring looks like for these men and present their perceptions of mentoring relationships as well. Table 1 serves as a quick reference to the participants, provides their college classification, and lists the mentoring programs in which they were participating at the time of the study.

Table 4.1: Study Participants and Mentoring Program Involvement

Participant	Classification	Mentoring Program Involvement
David	Senior	African American Male Dialogue Series (AAMDS)
Dominique	Senior	Staff Member Mentee
Deion	Senior	AAMDS, Staff Member Mentee
Kenneth	Junior	AAMDS, Staff Member Mentee
Jeffrey	Senior	Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) Mentoring Program Participant
Camden	Senior	AAMDS, Staff Member Mentee
Jordan	Junior	Staff Member Mentee
Christopher	Senior	AAMDS, Faculty Member Mentee

Each section of the chapter starts with a picture of the artifact that the participants identified as meaningful and related to their individual experiences with mentoring. These artifacts are useful to create a visual for the reader and help him/her make connections to the essence of what mentoring signifies for the participating Black men. Next, I provide a narrative account of each participant and at the beginning of the narrative I briefly present their personal and familial background. I also provide information about their participation in mentoring previous to enrolling in college when that information was made available. Finally, each narrative presents the self-reported participation and perception of mentoring relationships. The narratives are written in first person to be able to report the participants' experiences from their point of view and to use verbatim pieces of data gathered throughout the study. These pieces of data come from both the individual interviews and information shared by the participants at the focus group session. All of the participants are from large cities in Texas except for one of them who comes from Georgia.

DAVID



Figure 4.1 Pharaoh of Egypt

David, twenty years old, is in his senior year of college. His family background consists of parents who separated when he was seven years old. He is a member of the first intercollegiate fraternity for Black men. David's artifact (figure 4.1) was a portrait of a pharaoh head, which is an adopted symbol of his fraternity. This fraternity uses a lot of Egyptian references and symbols due to the Egyptians being a civilization lead by darker skinned people. The fraternity prides itself on selecting students who show leadership. Being a member of this prestigious organization, with prominent Black Americans such as Martin Luther King Jr., Thurgood Marshal, Duke Ellington, W.E.B Dubois, and Jesse Owens as members, means a lot to David. He explained that some of the men in the community where he grew up were members of this fraternity. He remembers how they would always try to give back to the community and David strives to live up to the legacy of the organization and of the great men who were members before him. His artifact reminds him of just how far he has come and that "...even when

you are tired, there is still work that can be done to help others...” David uses his fraternity as a vehicle to provide programs and skills to students on campus.

David's Account

My parents separated when I was young. This also caused my siblings and I to be separated as well. My sisters and brother went to live with my mother and then I chose to stay with my dad and his side of the family. When I go home to visit from school I still reside with my dad and stepmom. I can also stay with my mother's family so it is nice to have that choice. Despite the early separation my family is really close actually. We are the type of family that has a Sunday dinner every week with our grandmother. We just hang out and enjoy each other. We all also choose to come together on holidays. I feel like this is what makes us such a close-knit family. We do not intentionally do things to hurt each other, but every family has those moments where you have disagreements and fights. You know, things just happen.

When it comes to being a student I try to be as studious as possible. But we all know life happens, and sometimes you make decisions that are not the best for a college student. I feel like with that, we all have to learn from our experiences, and college is one of the main factors in our life. So that's one of the major experiences that we have to learn from in general.

Due to my parents separation I grew up closer to my cousins than I did with my brothers and sisters. All of my cousins are older, so that is where I started to cling around older people as opposed to children or students or individuals that are my age. That being the case, they gave me a kind of knowledge because they helped shaped me. They kind of groomed me because they had gone to college and so had one of my parents.

My mother went to college, but she only went for two years. Growing up I was always around my cousins, and they basically took care of me. One of my cousins is my godmother. I basically call her my mom because she took care of me like she was my parent. My other cousin, I call him my brother. His dad, my uncle is my actual godfather. Because of their presence in my life, I feel like I did not have a choice about attending college. There was no thinking high school was the end of the road. Then besides knowing I had parents that did not make it in college, I wanted to make them proud by coming to college and just graduating. As a matter of fact, being here three years put a smile on my mom's face, because like I said before, she only managed to make it for two years. I am not going to settle for three years; I am not going to settle for four either. I feel like I'm just going to keep going until I graduate. I have to.

When I decided to attend this institution I was fortunate to get accepted. I played around when it came to college applications. I was more focused on getting a baseball scholarship so I didn't really apply to many schools. I had the academics, but I was more or less focused on sports in high school as opposed to getting to school academically and applying like a typical student. I thought the coaches would take care of that for me once I received my scholarship offer. I was offered a scholarship to a particular university but I was no longer interested in that university after I took a tour here with a few friends and my high school, and I liked the scenery. Honestly, this was the only campus tour that I took. As soon as I saw it, I was like man! I can only imagine what the experience out here is going to be like.

When it comes to mentoring that I am involved with I would have to say the African American Dialogue Series. I consider the Dialogue series as a mentoring

program because we have the African-American males on campus who are trying to make a difference, but who don't really know how to use their voice, so to say. So we have faculty and staff there along to guide us in the right direction, so that we can make that difference. I also have to mention my fraternity. The fraternity is more or less a mentoring program in itself, because you have people that come before you who know the ropes. They teach you how things are supposed to be and what you need to do. This helps to build the confidence that you need to go forward and be successful. I feel like my fraternity and the Dialogue series both serve their purpose in bettering me as a person.

To me mentoring is taking someone underneath your wing and having a certain care for them. The mentor and mentee do not always have to be blood related and in most cases they are not. It is when you have been through what that person is going through, and you know you don't want them to go down a path with the same mistakes that you made. There is a saying that goes, I have seen many troubles in my day, but none of them have been my own. That is something I take pride in because when I look at that, it reminds me that I have seen all the troubles and struggles around me, but I was fortunate enough not to experience any of that because somebody told me and taught me to go a different route.

I think that Black males should definitely be provided with mentoring opportunities. I think that's great, especially at a predominantly white university. Mentoring from peers is important as well. Last year my fraternity had these study sessions. We had sessions every Wednesday and we would just provide a room for people who needed help with schooling and things like that. We had a few regulars come

in every now and then. It was nice to help who we could. We just wanted to reach out and let students know that we are here and going through the same things too. It was good for it to come from students and not a member of the faculty or staff because sometimes they get a little busy. They are at another point in their life. They have families and things like that. We all can relate to each other as students because we are all going through the same things.

I think that there are both similarities and differences between peer mentoring and mentoring from faculty and staff members. The similarity would be that we are all searching for the common goal. We all want each other to succeed. We all come from different backgrounds and we all want to make someone proud. Regardless of if it is ourselves, our families, our friends; we all want to make somebody proud. I think the difference between the two is, like I previously stated, we are all at different points in our lives. It is good to see somebody around your age help you get to where you need to be because they are going through the same thing currently and just want to see you be successful. Some faculty and staff members on the other hand are just serving their purpose. By serving their purpose I mean doing their job. There are some who go above and beyond that. They serve as resources and are actually really good friends. Like I know when a Black male staff member recently passed away, a lot of people were affected by that because he was not just a mentor; he was a friend. The faculty and staff really help us out. They really push us forward. Especially being in a Greek letter organization, they really try to help you excel because they know once upon a time they were in the same position.

I would tell other undergraduate Black men... "the choice is yours"... because the choice is ultimately up to you if you want a mentor or not. But with that, it is like you have to be wise about your decisions because when you cannot really depend on your friends or your families, you can always fall back on your mentor. I mean your mentor is there for a reason, not just to help you with homework or to help you do this or to help you do that. They are there to offer guidance in life as if they were counselors almost.

Summary

This narrative portrays David as a well-rounded student and so is his approach to mentoring. In his view, mentoring should go beyond doing your job and should better the mentee as a person. A mentoring relationship will help you develop your confidence for success. Much like Good, Halpin, and Halpin (2000), David speaks about the importance of both peer and faculty/staff mentoring. He speaks highly of the mentoring he has received from faculty/staff members and he also values peer mentoring. When speaking about successful mentoring he lists some of the points given by Henderson (1985) and Jacobi (1991) such as having active participation in both roles as a mentee and mentor of peers. He fits both of those categories and takes pride in helping his fellow students be successful. David has been an active participant in the African American Male Dialogue Series (AAMDS) and has benefited from the conversations and lessons learned through participating in that group with his peers. His membership in the dialogue series and in his fraternity has helped him develop as a leader and makes him feel as a de facto peer mentor.

DOMINIQUE



Figure 4.2 Internship Badge

Dominique is in his senior year of college and is twenty-one years of age. His family background consists of being raised in a two-parent household with his four brothers. Dominique chose his internship badge as his artifact (figure 4.2). His current staff member mentor helped him to secure this internship; therefore, when he thinks of mentoring, he makes the connection to the assistance that was given to help him fulfill such an important requirement for graduation. The all access athletics badge also makes him think of his father who he credits as being his first mentor. In his words: “Being a professional athlete kept my father away from being at home with his family but it also provided access to material comfort that we would not have been afforded otherwise.” Dominique now desires to work in sports administration at a university and this internship will hopefully open doors for him in that area.

Dominique’s Account

I had the good fortune of being raised in a two-parent home. I have four brothers who also lived with us. My father has his bachelor’s degree. He went to a regional college here in Texas. He initially dropped out of college when he was drafted to play a

professional sport. He went back to complete the courses needed for his degree when he retired. My mother only has her high school diploma. My older brother is in college now, and my three younger brothers are still in high school. When it comes to being a student I consider myself to be hard-working, very loyal, and trustworthy. It is funny because at first I did not want to come to college. Thankfully I had a change of heart. I figured if I was going to better myself, I might as well come to college and start out by bettering myself here. There are times when I still get the feeling that I do not want to be here but it has to be done. I am so thankful to have the support of my immediate family and then my close friends. They were always pushing me to go to college and now they make sure I am doing well in college, and fortunately I am still here.

I have been very fortunate to find good mentors here on campus. I actually have two mentors. One is a staff member. He is the advisor for the student organization I was a member in. He's a very good dude. He helps me out a lot. Whatever I need, I can just ask him and he will do it for me, just about anything. He helped me to get my current internship. The other mentor is an undergraduate student. He is a pretty cool dude. We do not really keep in touch often though. We have two different lifestyles really. I feel that being around him is better for me because I am trying to change and the lifestyle that I live now is kind of crazy. Being in a mentoring program is not new for me because in high school I played sports and participated in a program called Go Force. In sports our coaches served as mentors to us and go force was a peer mentoring program where upperclassmen helped underclassmen prepare for college admission.

Mentoring to me is someone helping you, showing you the ropes and teaching you things. They are not necessarily preaching to you but letting you learn from your

mistakes while also helping you. The first mentor that I recall would be my father. Growing up he was there whenever I needed him. Not always physically due to being away in Florida during the season. I remember him always calling to talk to us, making sure everything was going good, telling us to get the job done, making sure we were doing well in school, and reminding us to take care of our mother because he was not there. So I saw that as being a good mentor, making sure our heads were on straight.

I feel that Black men should be provided mentoring opportunities. It is a great, great thing because of the way Black males are perceived in society. ...They should have someone to mentor them of the same race and ethnicity that has gone through similar things before them. It helps when the mentor is a little bit older so they can show them the ropes and let them know how things are going to be in the real world. This is not to downplay the importance of peer mentoring it just speaks to their differences. With the staff member we have a real man to man relationship. He does not sugarcoat anything. Though I may not want to hear what he has to say I respect and appreciate him enough to listen. He has a degree and has helped other students along the way so he knows what he is talking about. I can just go to his office or have lunch with him and that's the extent of it. With the student it is a little different. We do not really speak as much, but when we do he sugarcoats things more. We are peers so he cannot talk to me the way the staff mentor can. We can actually go out and do other things you wouldn't do with the faculty and staff. I can go to a party with him or something, just a whole different environment. It is like I have two completely different options. They are both good and both are definitely very helpful.

I am not currently serving as an official mentor to anyone because I do not feel that I would be a good mentor right now. I am mentoring my little brothers to make sure they are doing well because that is my family. I serve in two leadership roles on campus and as a result of that I have students who look up to me or seek me out to ask for advice. Sometimes people even come to our house after hours and hang out, talk to us and just ask us questions about the school, life, how we feel about certain things, and we just go from there and let them know how it is. The role that mentoring plays in my collegiate experience is growing. It started off slowly because I did not get my mentors until the end of my sophomore year and start of my junior year. I feel that it would have benefitted me to get involved with mentoring earlier because during freshman year my head was not on straight. I did not know anything about college. I would encourage new students to get involved immediately. Once I got a couple of mentors, I started learning new things and they started showing me everything around campus. It is kind of a big campus, so you are going to need somebody to help you out and just show you the ropes.

I have really enjoyed my time here at this institution. I have grown leaps and bounds. In a way... the fact that there are not many Black undergraduate males here helps us to be successful. It forces us to be supportive of each other and work together. I feel that some Black males want to get away from the black community, and they come here and view it as an escape of sorts. We constantly hear about all the statistics of black males not graduating, being successful, and etc. So they do not want to be a part of that. They come to this type of institution where they can just change things.

Summary

From this narrative it becomes evident that Dominique is in search of positive peer influence. Even though he does not openly acknowledge playing the role of a peer mentor he is actually helping others by providing information about the right path to follow to be successful at college and by sharing his college experience with those who ask for his opinion or view him as a role model (Rothera, Hawkins, & Hendry, 1991). It seems as if he has grown tremendously during his time in college and he attributes most of that to both peer and staff mentoring. He has a very supportive staff advisor and he is roommates and friends with a group of young men who serve in multiple leadership roles on campus. Though Dominique does not hold many leadership positions and is not a vocal leader it appears that he is the glue that holds the group of students who work with him together.

Dominique shares the sentiments of Leon, Dougherty, and Maitland (1997) that mentor and mentee should be matched based on similar characteristics, particularly those of race, ethnicity, and experiences. He explains this is especially true with regards to race and helping young Black men deal with situations that may be specific to them. Dominique also references the negative media images and connotations associated with being a Black male (Harper, 2009). He cites this as being a motivating force for him and other Black males to become successful and not fulfill the expectations set by the negative stereotype.

DEION



Figure 4.3 MLK Program & Mr. Debonair Trophy

At twenty one, Deion is in his senior year of college; his parents have been divorced since he was born. Deion provided two artifacts (figure 4.3); the first was a certificate of appreciation for his work with the Martin Luther King Jr. Program that the Multicultural Student Affairs Department puts on annually. The second artifact was a trophy that he received for participating in a contest (details of the contest are not disclosed to conceal the participants identity). These items symbolize growth for Deion since both situations were cases where he stepped outside of his comfort zone and opened up to be critiqued by others. He was encouraged to participate in both events by his mentors. One of whom passed away during his sophomore year and who had a huge impact on Deion's life and still continues to be a driving force in his decisions and actions. Deion brought the obituary from his funeral and was going to use that as his artifact originally, but instead he chose to go with these other two items because they represented situations illustrating the positive impact and growth he has had as a direct result of that mentoring relationship.

Deion's Account

I grew up with my mother as a single parent, but my father was still in the picture. My parents were divorced when I was born, so that's something that I grew up dealing with all of my life. My dad remarried twice and I have a half-brother from that first relationship; he is six months older than me. That marriage relationship ended when I was 14. Most recently, my dad remarried...in 2007...and... I gained three stepbrothers in this new marriage. My mom is currently in a relationship, but she is not married.

When it comes to me as a student every day is a busy day. Honestly, I am either at work, school, or I'm always on the go doing something. I am rarely at home. If I am, I am asleep. I just really like to stay involved here on campus and maintain relationships and try and help other people where I can and help them get that same positive college experience that I have gotten. I really enjoy the college experience and try to make the most of it. It was kind of an unwritten rule that you just go to college after high school. I have seen other people graduate from high school and then they just stayed at home and that is something I definitely did not want to do. As soon as all of my cousins graduated they went to college, so that's all I have known. I did not know about the actual transition process or the struggle of trying to do financial aid so that was different. I just knew I definitely wanted to go to college.

I was assigned my mentor when I first came here in the summer of 2009. It was new to me at first just trying to figure out what exactly you are supposed to do. I was not involved in any mentoring programs prior to this. In high school I held the position of

Student Council Vice President. So it was not necessarily mentoring, but I was still helping students get involved in a sense. It contained some aspects of being a mentor but without the formal title. I understood that mentors were for guidance and if you needed help adjusting to college or just needed someone to go to then you can go to them as your mentor. I still remember our first meeting. It was just us introducing ourselves to one another and just kind of getting to know each other's background information. That university staff member is still my mentor to this day.

I also serve as a mentor. I currently have four mentees. Only one is official through the mentoring program. If I see a freshman or just an underclassman in general trying to do good things I kind of take them under my wing if I can and help them. To me mentoring is helping someone when they are in need and then being there for them, being reliable, being a resource to someone, like an outlet. If they are going through things, you can be there for them, even if it's just listening, but also guiding them on the right path on how things should be done properly.

At times... there is both... good and bad elements involved when dealing with mentoring. It can really be a struggle. This past year people got excited about being a mentor. Sometimes they would try and take on too many and then they would lose relationships or you would not notice any growth in the relationships. That is why I try not to have too many mentoring relationships. I try to help people, so I will just take people in or I will have a friend say, "Oh, you should mentor this student here." So it is kind of hard to say no to that. Like why would I turn down trying to help someone? I think the good aspects of having a mentor outweigh the bad. I know my mentor came through for me when we were doing the MLK celebration, for example, and we were

looking for sponsorships. He gave me some e-mails contacts and those leads helped secure sponsorship of the event for us. This is just one of many positive examples.

I think every male and especially Black males definitely need to be mentors to these young people coming into college now. When I entered college upperclassmen were definitely trying to help the underclassmen just get involved, maintain connections, and grow as a black male here on campus. This rising sophomore class was a little rocky when they arrived on campus. I feel that they did not get the mentoring that they needed. This was made up for with the past freshman class as they had an abundance of people willing to mentor them. I am very happy about this because I think mentors definitely play a big role here in college. I have been fortunate to have official and unofficial mentors. The unofficial mentors have been there just to give me advice on things with orgs or always checking in and asking questions like; how are you doing in class, how is your family, are you taking time for yourself? I cannot emphasize enough how good it is to see a black male wanting to give back to another black male and make sure they go on the right path and get the most from their college experience.

Now that I am an upperclassman I can really see the importance of peer mentoring and the difference between that and faculty and staff mentoring. During my freshman year, my resident assistant introduced me to a very important student leader who was a senior at that time. After meeting him, he took me under his wing as a little brother. He charged me with meeting more of the black community here, but not just the students, the faculty and staff too. Through him I met a staff member who is now my advisor for BSA. The student leader showed me the ropes of how to get involved, how to be a successful student, how to make wise choices, and how to prepare myself for my

upcoming career. He always presented himself so well. I vividly remember wanting to model myself in that view. I feel like this was so different from my staff mentor relationship. There is only so much someone who is older can tell you. You can actually see and experience things with a peer who is not that much older than you. I feel like my relationship with the student as far as him mentoring me, it was easier to get access because he was a student too, so that helped. So he kind of understood some of the same things I was doing. We were involved in some of the same projects too. So the peer mentoring helps out a lot in student life.

I would definitely recommend all new undergraduate Black males to get a mentor for three primary reasons. The first is because they will help you adjust here to college. Two, they will be a valuable resource for you. Three, they can also serve as an advisor to you and help you succeed academically while you learn the ropes. Black men have been successful as students here and I think mentoring does have a part to do with it. The key is involvement especially during that first year experience. Then comes being on the other side, serving on the executive board of organizations. In this role you get to see how your events or your meetings really affect the campus and that really makes you want to stay here and complete your degree.

Summary

From his narrative, we can learn that Deion is an exceptional student leader on campus. He has participated in both ends of the mentoring spectrum as a mentee and as a mentor. He is able to articulate in different ways what good quality mentorship should look like. Deion elaborates on the difference and importance of having both types of mentors, one that is an older and more knowledgeable adult and another that is a young

man who shares similar interests and preoccupations for success. He notes how these relationships formed naturally and were not confined to formal rules or policies (Parsloe, 1995). He has a well-established mentoring network and does a good share of mentoring and assisting the underclassmen that he comes in contact with. An important piece of information he shared was that because he enjoys helping students succeed so much, he plans to pursue a master's degree in student affairs so that he can do it for a living. Deion is a clear example of a case where the role model serves as a mentor as well (Blackwell, 1989), creating a cycle where the student leaders are eager to help each other be successful and serve as peer mentors in the process. Lee (1999) mentions a negative of role modeling being that the role model may not be aware that others are looking up to or emulating them. Deion embraces the role of being a role model for others and his mentoring relationships and the things he has learned from them, i.e. how to dress appropriately for each occasion have helped him be successful at it. When things do not go well he looks to learn from those experiences and then they can be shared with others to help them have a more successful experience.

KENNETH



Figure 4.4 High School Champions

Kenneth is twenty-one years old. He is a junior and sociology major with a minor in business and he transferred from another university where he used to play sports. He was raised by his grandmother because his mother passed away when he was 12 and credits his grandmother with teaching him how to be a good man. Kenneth chose the sign from his high school as his artifact because it has many meanings for him (figure 4.4). One of them is feeling proud of his neighborhood. According to him, even though it was a very tough environment to grow up; it has taught him many life lessons and has made him the man he is today. In addition, the sign has chronicled the majority of his athletic successes. When his teams won state championships it would be posted on the sign and much of his status was tied to his athletic ability in his neighborhood and school. The sign reminds him of the good and bad times he had there and how far he has come as an individual.

Kenneth's Account

I have two sisters. We are from a very tough neighborhood. Our family is strong. I love my family very much. We were raised tough and taught that family is all you have. I learned that this was true very early in life. My grandmother would not allow

us to us our upbringing as an excuse especially when it came to being successful in school. When it comes to me as a student I would say that I am ambitious. I consider myself a Malcolm X student. What I mean is by any means necessary to get the job done. I do not settle for the word no. I always feel like where there is a will, there is a way. I do not stop until I get what I want even if I have to take extra steps. When I am in class, I not only do the work; I go talk to the teacher also. It is important to meet the teacher and make sure they know my name and my dedication to my education.

I went to college originally as an athlete. College has always been mandatory for me because I knew I was going to go play sports due to my high school success I did not know where I was going to attend but I always knew I was going somewhere. I was one of the fortunate few that were blessed as an athlete to be able to play on the next level. My grandmother has always been my biggest supporter. I had a couple of guys who were like big brothers in a sense. Some came and left when I stopped playing sports and there are others who have stayed around and are still supporting me. When it came to choosing a school I just wanted to get out of Texas. I was ready to get out and experience life. I have always been a person who dreams big. I know there is more out there than just Texas. Actually I have seen it. I traveled to 40 of the 50 states playing AAU sports. We actually played a tournament at the institution I decided to attend.

I feel that mentoring is very important. I think of mentoring as someone, regardless of sex who is willing to give and receive advice. That person is there to help guide you on the right path. The mentor should not be biased in regards to any decisions and they should always give genuine answers and advice. I am currently involved with the African American Male Dialogue Series and I have a staff member who serves as a

mentor. I really enjoy these experiences. If I need anything he is there to give me advice and anything like that. I have met a lot of important people through him.

I have had good and bad experiences with mentoring. My worst example of a mentor happened while I was playing sports. I had this person who was serving in that role. Whenever I needed money, he would provide it. Whenever I needed a ride, he would take me to my destination. He always gave me advice which I thought was the best advice at the time. When I stopped playing sports then that person stopped coming around. I felt that he was looking at me as an investment in a sense and not a person. On the other side of the spectrum, the best feeling I had with a mentor happened with another person who was there with me the same amount of time as the other guy. When I stopped playing sports he stayed involved with me. He stayed right there, kept calling, and acted as if nothing changed. That was a really good feeling.

Any mentor I have will have big shoes to fill. My very first mentor was my mother. She taught me a lot in 12 years of my life. At the tender age of 12 I knew basic means of survival anywhere on Earth just from what she taught me. She taught me how to talk to people. She taught me how to never accept no. She taught me how to keep going. She taught me how to survive on the streets. She taught me how to sell weed. She taught me how to fight. She taught me how to just survive. She demanded that I get my education first and foremost.

I think it is so important for Black males to have mentoring opportunities. This is especially true when it comes to dealing with college. We play the minority role here just as we do anywhere else. We have to come together and we have to have somebody who has made it through before to show us the proper way to do it. I think that is what this

campus is lacking. Coming from another institution I can say that over there all, the alumni and the seniors, come back... I think here the seniors get into the habit of disappearing during their senior year. I think this is the wrong way to do it. As a senior you are about to leave, so you should come in and show a freshman or sophomore, maybe even a junior how to get to that stage instead of just acting like "Oh, I've got my stuff. I'm out of here." That is selfish to me. I definitely love the idea of receiving mentoring from this group and think we need a lot more of it.

I have a unique perspective of peer mentoring... I do not have any official mentees. People ask me questions and come to me for help, but I do not claim anybody as mentees. If they ask me something, I'll give them my best advice. If I have it, I give it to them. I think being a mentor is really not just being called a mentor. That really does not mean a lot to me. If I can help somebody, then cool. As far as just like, "Oh, that's my mentor or something," I really could care less who says I am his mentor. As long as I can help somebody, that's all that matters to me. Not the title.

I learned this approach from my first mentor at college... I actually still talk to him...to this day. Relationships are priceless. I have learned so much from them. My mentor here is a great resource. If I need something or some encouraging words I know I can contact him. In contrast, my relationship with my peer mentor from college is on a different level because we have actually grown together. He showed me how to be successful by being the student body president and holding numerous other leadership positions on campus. This has even carried over to his professional career. After graduating he was elected to a City Council. At the time of his appointment he was the youngest person to ever serve in that capacity. He's making history. The great thing

about this is he takes me through every single step, good or bad. I have been able to learn from him.

There is definitely a difference between peer mentoring and faculty or staff mentoring. I feel that peer mentoring has a greater impact. Even though that faculty or staff member may have gone through a similar situation, they are not going through what you are going through so recently. It is harder to relate to somebody who went to school and graduated college in 1995 or 2000 when it is 2012. Even though the problems may be similar, they are different... It is not going to be the same for them but it will be for the student who is going through it with me.

Summary

Kenneth comes from a background of economic struggle and is able to reflect on the importance of getting involved in mentoring relationships where the adult does not have selfish interests when helping the mentee. Kenneth explains that a mentor can be anyone, regardless of sex, who is willing to give and receive advice and who is genuinely concerned for the wellbeing of the mentee (Klopf and Harrison, 1981; Ardery, 1990). A mentor is someone who helps you in all aspects and sees you as a person not as an investment due to your skills, in this case sports skills. Kenneth's description of a good mentoring experience agrees with what Salinitri (2005) would identify as an enduring and meaningful relationship. Kenneth has come to embrace the concept of mentoring after losing his first mentor (his mother) at a young age and having some experiences where others who he thought of as mentors attempted to take advantage of him. In another instance, Kenneth explained that adjusting to the new institution after his transfer was very difficult and affected his grades. However, he reached out for help and worked very

hard to turn things around. He credits his involvement with the AAMDS as instrumental to the turnaround he made both socially and academically due to its flexibility and ability to hold him accountable (De Janasz & Sullivan, 2004; Smith, 2007). Once he accomplished the goal of being a better student he sought out to help others. He has been very vocal about sharing his story and detailing how unsuccessful he was. Many students would be embarrassed to be so open and candid about a topic this sensitive but he uses it as a warning for others and it also serves as a reminder of what he went through and a constant reminder and opportunity to learn from his previous experiences.

JEFFREY



Figure 4.5 Flag of Argentina

Jeffrey is a twenty-two-year-old senior and is studying international relations. He was raised by his mother and father and has two younger siblings. He takes the role of being the oldest child very seriously and tries to be a positive example. Jeffrey chose the flag of Argentina as his artifact because it represents an amazing opportunity he had to study abroad for a semester (figure 4.5). It was an experience that changed his life forever and gave him a new perspective; for example, he wants to live overseas as a member of the Peace Corps. The flag reminds him of the doubts he had before going to live in a foreign place where he did not know anyone. It reminds him that he is strong

and capable of doing anything he sets his mind to and that he needs to be open minded and take chances.

Jeffrey's Account

I come from a middle class family. We were not too rich and not too poor either. This has a lot to do with my mentality and approach to life today. When it comes to school I think of myself as a global student. I want to be active in all parts of people's lives and that includes people across the United States and the rest of the globe. So that makes me a go-getter. That makes me independent. That makes me a leader. That is how I see myself!

I always knew I would go to college. My parents sent me to their alma mater high school, which is a college preparatory school. It was there that my parents met and began dating. So I went there and they had a good program within the school to get you segued into college life and preparatory for college academics. I originally did not know what kind of colleges I was looking to attend. I just knew that I had to go and be successful. Both of my parents had gone to college. My mom went for two years. My dad went for a semester and then decided to drop out. So they did not really have any good experience within the college realm until I went to college.

I chose this institution because I like the feel of the town. I also like the size of the school but I was not really a fan of the demographics and the ratio of races here. It did not seem evenly balanced in my mind. I was okay with that because the school had the international relations major that I was looking for. I always knew that was the field I wanted to go into and so that is why I came here.

Mentoring has been very important to me prior to attending college and during my collegiate years as well. To me mentors are meant to be role models, just a good influence in their mentee's life. The mentor should enable them to pursue things that they never thought they could before. So mentors are capable of making plausible dreams, and for helping those mentees to pursue those things.

I am currently a student employee for the university and have been for two years. In this role I am supervised directly and indirectly by professional staff members. Over the course of my employment my supervisors have been very good mentors to me. I have had two direct supervisors. Though they were both very different people, they each approached the staff in a similar way. There was sense of focusing on the now, but also on our thoughts about the future. They wanted to know my goals for the future and how they could help prepare me to attain those goals. I definitely took advantage of that. If I did not know something or if I did not know which route I should take I would definitely go to them because they seemed more grounded than I was. The position has also allowed me to serve as a peer mentor. A lot of students that I interacted with at work would see me as a mentor. I would help them with simple things like; trying to find the physical location of classes on campus, trying to figure out what they should think about with regards to choosing a major or other life and school related issues they may face. I have been able to gain and give so much through my job because to me, we are the first to encounter to the incoming freshmen class. We set the foundation for their whole college career. I had great students in this position when I was a freshman and now I am about to graduate. So I think the position has played a huge part in my whole collegiate life and career.

I hope the peer mentoring I have provided to others has been as helpful to them as it was for me. I was involved with many organizations on campus but my experience with the international studies club was life changing. There were student leaders who would show us videos and show us their experiences abroad and so forth. Being around them really influenced me and I decided I wanted to go study abroad. I wanted to do all the things they were doing around the world and I ended up getting that opportunity. I spent a semester studying in Argentina.

My first mentoring experiences were with my scoutmaster from my troop in Boy Scouts. Before he passed away he definitely was always there for all the boys in my troop. Even though we were young, I still remember him saying a lot of these big picture phrases to us. I remember thinking what is this guy talking about at the time. I did not understand what his phrases had to do with me trying to put my tent together. When I reflect on it now, I think my whole experience going through each rank in Boy Scouts to get to Eagle Scout made me appreciate my relationship with him before he passed away. He made me appreciate Boy Scouts of America. He made me appreciate all of my hard work that I put in, and the great satisfaction I get from being an Eagle Scout.

Mentoring opportunities are very important for Black males. I think that it is very necessary. When I first came here, I think the percentage of African-Americans was 3% and now I think it might be 7%, and so that is a good sign. The underdog is going up and that is good! I think that stems from people in their lives advocating good things and just pushing them to achieve something, to achieve going to school, to achieve something even after school. This is important because in our society males are seen as leaders. Then when you break it down by races, we are one of the least to be seen as a leader and

we want to change that. We want people to look at us and say he is a leader or he can be a leader. We have to level the playing field. It should be equal across the board and my race should not dictate my leadership potential.

I think the university's official mentoring program needs to be more active toward the Black community, especially the males. Like I said, males are seen as leaders... not to say that women are not leaders... I think if we just put some good advocates toward the black male community, you could see a lot of changes at the university. I think this would help that enrolment percentage of Blacks that is slowly growing get a lot higher and also help the retention at the same time.

Summary

Of the study participants, Jeffrey is the most advanced as far as matriculation is concerned; he will graduate soon. He has a wider and more global perspective than the other participants and this can be attributed to his major, his love for all things international, and having actually lived in a foreign country as part of the college experience. For example, he volunteered that he plans to join the Peace Corps soon if accepted. Serving others seems to be important to him. Mentoring has been integrated deeply into his life; from the influence of his parents who encouraged him to attend the college preparatory high school, his scout master who helped shape and mold him into the man he has become today, and his supervisors he had as a student worker on campus who helped him be successful academically and as a student leader (Good, Halpin, & Halpin, 2000). His narrative serves as an example of Lee's (1999) discussion of formal mentoring programs becoming institutionalized facets of university cultures. It was very interesting to note that another of the research participants listed Jeffrey as one of his

mentors. They met through Jeffrey's job on campus. This supports his opinion of how those student leadership positions can make you a default mentor and role model (Blackwell, 1989). Another important point of his narrative is his concern about the need for change to increase enrollment and retention rates of Black students. He has seen the percentage of this group increase while he has been enrolled but it has not grown at the same rate as some other groups has. Being a youth who was involved with mentoring helped him to get to college (Struchen & Porta, 1997). Mentoring has also helped him reach this stage where he is now, about to be a college graduate. He feels mentoring, especially amongst peers can be used to help the university reach their goals (Santovec, 1992).

CAMDEN



Figure 4.6 Fraternity Crest

Camden is a senior year student majoring in public relations with a minor in business. He is 21 years old and was raised by his mother. He aspires to attend law school after he completes his current studies in college. The artifact he selected is a backpack that has his fraternity shield on it (figure 4.6); according to him, joining this fraternity was one of the best decisions he has ever made. He further explained that by joining the fraternity he gained mentors who have helped him grow and develop. He has

also gained brothers which is something that is very important to him. In his words, “the fraternity provides a group of likeminded gentlemen, who work together to achieve, to hold each other accountable”.

Camden’s Account

I was raised by a single mother. I do not have many ties to my biological father. I had a stepfather but they decided to divorce during my freshman year in college. So now things are back to the way they started... It is just me and my mom trying to make it happen! ...When it comes to me as a student I have made many mistakes. I have also excelled in many different things as well. I have learned to understand that making mistakes and failing does not mean it’s over. In fact, it is just the beginning in most cases. I always knew that I was going to college. My mom had the path already laid out for me when I was born. She has always said, “CAMDEN, you are going to college.” Fortunately when I got to college I learned to love it and respect it.

Everyone was so supportive especially my stepdad and friends. My mom never had the chance to graduate from college. She only received her associate’s degree. So I wanted to do it for her. I just remember there being so much excitement for my friends and me. “I’m going to school here. I’m going here,” and I was so proud to actually be able to say that I was going to a four-year institution. That definitely was one of those factors that gave me an extra push.

I was fortunate to find mentors when I got to college. My mentor is a staff member here at the university and he is also my Fraternity brother. I have had plenty of mentors and if it was not for them I would not be in the position I am today. I got into the mentor program through two other staff members who recommended it to me. My mentee

is a first year student. I think that peer mentorship and accountability is a great thing as well.

I think of mentoring as steering someone in a positive path. Not being afraid to challenge someone and make them think of alternate options. Letting them know that there are always going to be consequences for every action that they make, regardless if it is good or bad. I have been involved with mentoring for a long time. I am a Boy Scout. I love throwing that out there. We had our own mentoring program with our troop that was run by our church. So every Saturday after our Boy Scout meetings they would gather up some of us younger guys. They would play football with us, basketball, and just talk to us about life. In high school, I was a part of this organization called Bridging the Gap, which was a mentor group for us high school students to talk about the problems that we were facing as African-American males in school. This was really helpful because I went to a majority white high school. We would go with the organization to the middle schools where they were majority black populated and talk to them about life, high school, and college. So Bridging the Gap helped me out as well.

When I think back on my first mentor I would have to say it was my stepdad. He got me into the habits of taking care of myself and focusing on school. I remember I never used to brush my hair before I went to class, and he would be like “What are you doing, go get the brush.” That seems like something so small but it meant so much. He got me to understand that time is money. If you are not really doing anything productive, then you are actually wasting time. So he definitely helped to instill a “go get it, go do it” mentality in me.

Mentoring is a two way street and I have had some negative experiences as well. It is crazy because mentoring, which you think of as positive may not always be that way. Who you look up to can determine the type of mentorship you receive. I was an avid MTV watcher when I was younger. I thought I could be just like Nelly with my pants sagging and that whole image. So...I think about my older stepbrother... I used to think he was the coolest person. Now that I think back on it, he probably was not that cool. He encouraged me to do some things I should not have done especially when he knew I was following in his footsteps. I remember I told my mom, I would never do something like that and then all of a sudden there I was doing it. I would have never known how to do it if he did not show me how. This and other bad experiences have not deterred me from seeking out mentors.

I think that mentoring is amazing. There are a lot of Black males that need mentoring, especially in college. We need to realize what is important... I think a lot of guys don't. They do not understand that we are out of high school now. We are men. You represent yourself and your family. It is no more slap on the wrist; no more in school suspension or detention. Here in college you can get branded as someone who just failed. In college, you have your whole network. These people you are meeting, they see you. They are always watching you. I think it is probably one of the most important things. Any successful brother ever in the world has had mentors that help them realize what is really important so that they do not make those same mistakes as they did.

If I did not have a mentor, I would probably be just that one guy who went to class and then home. I became active because of my mentors. I have made friends, best friends because of them. I think with mentors, you realize who you are as a person and

you become more comfortable with that. For example, my short shorts. Everyone likes to make fun of my short shorts, but I promise you if I was in high school and I did that, I would totally stop it. Now in college with good people by your side and talking to you, you realize that you are your own person. Your happiness is important and you should not change for anybody. Peer mentoring really helped me understand this.

Peer mentoring I would say is like the evil definition of a “student accountability partner.” Sometimes faculty mentors cannot get through to you because it is kind of like your dad telling you, “Oh, do not do this, son. I have been there, done that.” It is just one of those things where you will still do it anyway. When it comes from a student and you actually have someone your age tell and show you pertinent examples of what they have actually been through it makes you realize that this stuff really does happen. It scares you a little bit because I think as students we kind of develop this idea that we are invincible. We start to believe that we will not get in trouble, fail, make mistakes, and that we can do anything we want and not feel any consequences for it. The whole point of your peer mentor is to let you know bad things can and do happen. For me, my example was my student employment experience. I learned a lot from that situation that I was able to share. You have to stay on your “A” game, because when you think you have got it, stuff can be easily taken away from you. You just never know. You think you are chilling. You are loving life. You are having fun. You start taking things for granted like the situation you are in, the position. So when I talk to my peers, it’s more of like just because you have it today does not mean you are going to have it tomorrow. I also tell them my story. I want them to know just because you fail today does not mean you will not succeed tomorrow. I found out that one of my mentors had lost his student

employment position as well and that turned my life around. I remember just being so down and defeated because I felt like I lost everything on campus. I no longer had a good reputation. I just went through this whole point where I was just so distant from the school. I did not want to be a part of the University in any sort of way. A few weeks later I joined this leadership institute and I met an alumnus. He told me, "Yeah man, I lost my job, too." It was crazy because this is the same guy that went on to be very successful in multiple areas and endeavors. I learned a lot from that and it has definitely made me push for everything I want to do.

I think the Black male students that graduate have always been under that umbrella from the Coalition of Black Faculty and Staff. This is where most of the mentors come from. I feel that the students that join Black Student Alliance and Black Men United, they graduate simply because they are surrounded by those mentors and they have those peer mentors who are trying to accomplish the exact same things. It is definitely hard to be an African-American on campus and graduate alone with no type of push, help, or love from anyone. The ones that are like family are quick to help anyone out. If you need help, we are always there to help you and we will always be able to plug you in with someone that can help you. I think that's how we graduate brothers.

I would say for anyone listening... "Do not take anything for granted. Always thank the people that help you, because you never know when they are going to be gone. Nothing lasts forever." I was blessed to have the opportunity to meet a staff member who passed away and to be able to call him my mentor. It is amazing. He was the nicest guy ever. I still remember meeting him, I still remember going into his office. I will never forget all of the time he would use in talking to me. I would say love your mentors, love

them, because they are going to be your best friend throughout college. They are always going to be there. I know he's watching over everyone today.

Summary

From his narrative it becomes evident that Camden is a student who takes the concept of mentoring to heart. His definition of mentoring clearly points out to the importance of steering someone in a positive path and letting them know about the consequences, both bad and good, that each action has. The person you choose to emulate or the mentor you choose can make a big difference as well; in his words “Who you look up to can determine the type of mentorship you receive.” Mentoring is about helping the mentee to pursue and imagine possibilities for success, but it is also about challenging and letting them know they are making a mistake (Parker, 2004). His account aligns with Ardery’s (1990) explanation about mentoring as the transmission of knowledge between the mentor and mentee within the context of teaching and learning. Camden reported that he recently joined a fraternity and was elected as the Polemarch (President) which has done wonders for his confidence. Camden is aware of the importance of adopting a mature attitude at college and behaving accordingly.

Camden shares a very important experience in his collegiate experience with us. It was clearly a turning point in his life when he lost his student employment position. His mentor was there for him every step of the way and helped him reflect, process, and grow from the experience. This mentoring relationship was one he chose and initiated on his own based largely on similarities between him and the mentor (Leon, Dougherty and Maitland, 1997). This experience has changed his view and encouraged him to prepare and help other to be successful and to learn from their experiences. It has also

encouraged him to be open to new ideas and experiences. Camden was one of the participants who acknowledged that he had mentors of other races. Though they may not be Black there are still similarities that they share and things that he can learn from them which he feels is the most important thing (Salinitri, 2005).

JORDAN



Figure 4.7 Black Men United

Jordan, 21 years old, is a junior student majoring in pre physical therapy, exercise, and sport science. He describes his family as a low-income group of five. It consists of Jordan, his two sisters, his mother and his father. Jordan's artifact is a picture of the student organization Black Men United (BMU). This organization relies on its core values of promoting love, unity, and brotherhood in order to maintain its status as a prominent organization on the campus. According to his explanation, this picture is the artifact that he relates to mentoring because the meetings empower young black men to address popular yet controversial issues and propose solutions to those issues within the black community (see figure 4.7). BMU operates as a 'think tank' by providing a space where black men can have open dialog. Jordan thrived in this environment and quickly rose through the ranks of leadership in the organization. He has found plenty of peer

mentors as well as faculty/staff mentors through this involvement. Jordan reported that this group has helped shape his experience on campus.

Jordan's Account

We grew up well even though we were on the low income side of town. My siblings and I all ended up making it out. I am in college; I have a sister that graduated from college with a degree in fashion merchandising, and my oldest sister is a cosmetologist. So I feel like we have done well for ourselves. My dad has worked a 9 to 5 hour day all his life. He started at bus stations, railroads, and now he is working at city public service office. My mom also has a 9 to 5 hours-day schedule working for the city in code compliance. Neither of my parents went to college. This was one of the motivating factors for me to go.

I definitely consider myself a growing student in terms of my academic skills... I started off with poor studying skills, time management skills, and things of that nature. I came from the lowest performing school in my very large city. I honestly feel that I came in not prepared for college academically. Once I arrived here it was a big adjustment. There was a lot that was forced upon me but I feel I handled it well. I have managed to make it to my junior year and that is a big accomplishment. I feel like I have grown to be a better student. I try to learn from my mistakes and from all the people that have taught me as far as how to handle time management and other helpful tips

Attending college was something that I always wanted to do because I felt that it was the next chapter of life after high school. It was expressed in a very persuasive way when I was younger. It was as if college or higher education would be the answer to all of our problems. I did not get this at first but now I see the growth from where I was to

where I am now. Thankfully I received that message from my sister because it was not taught at school much. There were a lot of faculty and staff members that have expectations for the student not to go to college. So as far as being pushed, it was mostly by people who saw that you had that fire, that hunger to go further with your studies than the rest of the students that they see walking in the hallways every day.

I chose to attend this institution primarily on following in the footsteps of my sister. That is the honest answer even though I never really tell people that. I remember sitting at home and thinking about what college to go to. I was continuously surprised at how big the institutions were. Though this institution is large as well it had a small school feel. I also knew I would have my sister to help as needed. She had a great experience here and thought that I would as well.

When it comes to mentoring I do not have any established permanent mentoring. I know there are certain staff members that do look out for me since I have met them. The tricky part is that you have to meet them. They are not always guaranteed to be around. If I would have never met three particular staff members I probably would not have any relationships on campus at all. I probably would not know much about the university in the first place if it was not for those people and my being in certain organizations that they advise. In my high school there was an old lady who worked at the school. She was more of a mentor for us than anybody really because she looked out for us during our two last years of school. She would always check to see what we were doing, looking at how our grades were, looking at how we would dress and, encouraging us to get involved. Prior to that there was a distinguished gentleman program in middle school that I was involved in.

Mentoring to me is somebody to tell you whether you are doing all right or not. At the high school and college age all of the experiences are new. You do not know what to make of any of this. It is hard to ask questions when you do not know what to ask and who to ask. It is like having somebody there that will get in touch with you and ask; how are you doing, how are your grades, how is your money, are you looking for jobs, are you looking for internships? Having somebody there to prep you, talk to you, and motivate you. It will make your college experience better than anything when you have people that are there for you. So as far as mentoring, I feel it is a motivational push by somebody that has been in your shoes.

My first mentoring experience did not go that well. They were not really involved with me. I think it was impacted by the side of town I live on. They looked at me as if I was just another guy walking with his pants down, drinking a soda, and skipping class. So I do not think they really touched base with me... not like the people I call my mentors now. It was simply a part of their job. It was not as helpful as I think it should have been.

I think it is very important that Black males be provided mentoring opportunities. I feel this way because we obviously all know that this is a predominantly white college campus. The most you will get out of this campus is going to class and going back to your room or apartment. This environment may not cater to the things that you are used to having or need culturally to feel comfortable and be successful. Being a black male, the majority of us come from low income families or single parent homes. We do not really have anybody looking out for us except for our moms that are miles away. If we had more mentoring here at this campus a lot of black males would have better grades.

They would start off well. They would be more involved. Deion is a perfect example. He will tell you when he got to campus; he was getting involved because he always had somebody to talk to. He had someone to let him know what he could do to make his college experience better. If more people had that type of hands on help, there would be a better and more successful group of Black males on campus.

Peer mentoring can also play a major part of helping Black men be successful on academic campuses. I mentor two young men. I try to keep in contact with them. I hung out with them a couple of times. I just wanted to make sure everything was going all right in their lives and wanted them to know that if they had anything they needed to talk to me about, they could do that. I just spoke with one of them last night. We were sitting in the car at my apartment just talking. Nothing makes you feel better than to have that person come to you and say thank you for the help that you gave them. I say the peer mentoring is more of a close interaction, because you cannot always get in contact with the staff and faculty members. Peer mentoring is 24 hours a day. I remember when an upperclassman was here and one night I had to call him. I had to just talk to him about something that I was going through, and he sat and he listened. I say that is one experience that I feel like shows that peer mentoring is more intimate than the staff mentoring.

My mentors really help me get involved on campus. Every time they have something going on, "Jordan, do you want to be in this? Jordan, do you want to be in that?" I have had two years in the Martin Luther King Jr. program that goes on here due to them. Then through seeing my involvement in Black Men United (Figure 4.7) the advisor wanted to get to know me. We sat down and talked many times. It was real cool.

He is just that person that I know I could go to and talk to about anything I am having a problem with. He has also opened up numerous doors for me as well. They both serve as an emotional outlet. Not saying that I have to go weeping to that person, but if I have like a philosophical thought in my head that I just want to get off then I can go talk to one. Or if I am going through anything in life, I could just go and talk to the female mentor and just let everything out. They are not mom and dad but they are people that care for you as a student.

I would encourage all incoming Black males to get involved with the organizations, because organizations branch out to community service, social networking, and that is where a lot of people start off with being involved in finding peer and staff mentors. If it were not for me knowing about those organizations, I would be in my room playing Xbox all day. I would also encourage them to be open to introduce yourself.

In terms of the university I would suggest more outreach. You could have a mentoring organization. You could have a mentor establishment. You could construct a building across the street for mentoring or any other resource but if you are not reaching out to those who need help, and just waiting for them to come and look for you then that is a bad idea. Mentoring is more of an outreach, not a convenience that just happens.

Summary

Jordan's narrative speaks to the difficulties that any student making the transition from high school to college may encounter. However, he also speaks to the specific needs that Black male students bring to college (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2006). He is explicit in demanding for a mentoring relationship that provides "hands on help" in order

to promote success among Black males on campus. In his own words: “If we had more mentoring here at this campus a lot of Black males would have better grades.” This strong belief makes him favor peer mentoring since, according to Jordan, it offers 24 hours availability (Brawer, 1996). He also favors group interactions more than one on one sit downs and connects with Caruso (1990) and his opinion of the misleading narrow focus of one on one mentoring. In a separate instance, Jordan reported that many of the underclassmen on campus look up to him and respect the work he does for the Black Men United student organization. It seems like mentoring has made a difference in his life as a student since he started as a student who did not have basic study skills and now he serves as a mentor for other peers (Philip & Hendry, 2000). He advises them on how to succeed both personally and academically. This is exactly what his mentoring relationships helped him to be able to do.

CHRISTOPHER



Figure 4.8 Mentee of the Year Award

At age 22, Christopher is a senior student majoring in music and works full time to put himself through school. He was raised with both parents in the home and is the youngest of seven children. Christopher decided to use his University Mentee of the Year Award plaque as his artifact (figure 4.8). He explained that this award is the first

thing that comes to his mind when reflecting on mentoring because of the amazing mentorship that he has received and not because he considers himself as the best mentee. Christopher further explained that his mentor went above and beyond to help make his experience the best that it could be, helped him grow, and challenged him to reach his potential. Christopher had no idea he was being nominated for the award and just remembers his mentor telling him to take that specific night off from work because he wanted him to go to this event with him. Thus, he was very surprised when he won and still feels that this should be a mentor of the year award for his mentor; just being able to soak up knowledge from him was reward enough for Christopher.

Christopher's Account

Education is very important in my family. My mom graduated with a degree from my current institution after having all of us. I have a sister who has a bachelor's degree, a brother who has a master's degree, and another brother who is working on a bachelor's degree right now. When it comes to me as a student I would describe myself as dedicated. I started out my first year at a junior college close to home just trying to save some money and get my basic courses out of the way. I transferred here with 24 credit hours. I have been working full-time since I have been in college, so that has definitely been a factor, but it has never really hindered me from being able to at least pass my classes. I have not always had the highest GPA, but I have always stayed above at least a 2.5. So I am grateful that I have been able to do that.

I knew very early on that I wanted to go to college because I was able to watch my older siblings. Being at the bottom of so many children, you just get to sit back and watch. I saw some of the struggles that my brothers who chose not to go to college went

through and the difference between the pay grades and type of job opportunities and things like that were afforded those of my brothers and my sister who did go. So I decided back in the fifth or sixth grade that I was going to college. Though I have worked to put myself through school, I know if I ever got into a bind or something my parents would try and help me out. I try to ask them for as little assistance as possible considering that I still do have another brother who is in college and we have plenty of nieces and nephews back home. I receive a lot of spiritual and emotional support from people who are in my church. They constantly encourage me to keep it going and I always get that when I go to church so that is cool and very helpful.

Mentoring has also provided support for me and others. I am currently mentoring a couple of guys who I knew from back home that have come here to the University. It is just really cool to be able to give back. I know how important it was when somebody was mentoring me and was helping me out, showing me the way to just get through these years and get through a day. So when money gets tight or when you just kind of get frustrated, it is always cool to have those people there. So I try and definitely give back the way somebody gave to me. I was involved with mentoring before college through my church. I tried to just speak into young guys' lives. I would always tell them, do not get caught up into the hype of the many Black male stereotypes.

Mentoring to me is just being there, supporting someone who you know is trying to get where you have been or do what you have done. It is the act of just being there for someone no matter what. Even if it is just to have a conversation. Mentoring does not have to mean financial; it does not have to mean an object. I still remember my first mentor. What I remember most is the fact that it did not matter how much I thought I

knew. It did not matter what situation I thought I could take care of. If he knew a better way or if he clearly saw that I was not going down the right path, he would not hesitate to tell me. He would not hesitate to show me. He would not hesitate to be there for me. It was just automatic. Like whether I asked for it or not, we could have a simple conversation and it would turn into him helping me out, and I was not looking for it; I was not trying to get anything....so it was automatic...

...I will probably never forget this one time during my first semester here. I was complaining and talking about how I was working all these excessive and late hours at Chili's and yet my cell phone was going to be turned off because I could not pay the bill. Before I knew it, my mentor was paying to turn my cell phone back on. It just really meant a lot because he did not have to do that. I did not even want him to do it. I told him not to do it. But he said, "No, man. This isn't anything," so it just really spoke volumes. Then there are also bad times or not so great times when you almost have to check yourself. You have to really question yourself on the other side, like am I being the best mentor I could be? Am I doing those things for someone else like they were done for me? So it is definitely a check on both sides.

I think all Black males should be provided mentoring opportunities. I think it is awesome!!! That is one of the things that has got me to where I am at now. I am a senior now about to get my degree, and I know for a fact that I would probably be an eight- or nine-year senior if I did not have that help, the guidance, the asking of questions, and someone checking up on me. So it plays a big role, especially on this campus. When I came here, I did not see many other young black men. Not many Blacks period, but definitely not black men. The ones that you do see, a lot of times it seems like they are

already involved or they already have their cliques. So I missed out on some things my first couple of semesters. When I finally got connected with someone who looked like me, spoke like me, and I could see they were trying to go in the same direction as what I was trying to go in, it really helped me out a lot because I felt like I belonged.

Most of the peer mentoring relationships I know of were formed by just asking the questions “hey man, what are you doing tonight? What are you getting into? What are you involved in? Have you been to this meeting? Have you gone to this?” We might be at the rec playing basketball and then the questions start. I do not think it should be too structured, especially because young men nowadays sometimes do not know how to really form those relationships. They do not know if it is really okay. It is kind of awkward sometimes especially if they don't know you too well. They think, “Why is this dude trying to help me out? I do not understand that,” because some men do not see asking for help as being manly.

Traditional male roles and perceptions are a big obstacle to mentoring when Black men initially get to campus. A lot of the times the way those walls are broken down is through one-on-one conversations or a really small group of guys having conversations. Here you can start talking about things and when you start talking, they realize, “Okay, this dude is just like me. Just like I’m trying to figure this out, he’s trying to figure this out.” So those walls start breaking down because it is like you do not have to try and pump yourself up. You do not have to try and be something you are not, because a lot of times we are trying to become something here, but we are really just not there yet. It is okay to not be there yet, but it helps to have somebody else who we can look at and say “Okay, this guy is not there either. We can kind of work this out at the

same time.” Or “maybe this guy does have some things that I like, and so let me try and figure those out. I can be vulnerable. I do not have to act like I’m already there with him.” Once this happens then the growing and development can take place.

I have benefited from faculty and staff mentoring as well as peer mentoring. Faculty and staff mentoring for me is usually random phone calls when you least expect it. They check up on you and provide assistance and connections. They introduce you to people who you probably would not have been able to meet otherwise. Then those people can open doors whether it is you need a recommendation letter down the road or any type of help and assistance.

There is a big difference in the types of mentoring. We will talk to peers about things that we will not talk to a staff member about. At the same time, you will talk to a staff member about something that you will not talk to a peer about. So they are definitely both needed. They both bring out a different aspect in you because again like I said, when it comes to the peer, you are able to sit down on that level having the same playing field; we are both trying to figure this thing out sometimes. Then with the staff, it is more like, “Okay, what is this guy saying? Because I need to make sure I’m lining up with this.” Then a lot of the times too, like the corrections and the rebukes that come down from staff, you are able to receive them better from your peers.

I would definitely encourage incoming Black male freshmen to get mentors. In choosing mentors, I think that you have to be very wise even as a young person. Whether you’re 18, 17, 19 years old, we are wise enough to be able to tell which type of people we need to allow ourselves to learn from. Like I said, there’s definitely a split. Everybody who comes to college does not have the same mindset. There are some who want to come

here and be different when they leave, and there are some who want to be that same knucklehead that they were when they came from whatever hood they were from. So I believe that as you are choosing that person, definitely be very wise, even if it takes looking at social networks and what they say and what they do on the weekends, just being wise about that. Then lastly, just try and make sure that the person who you choose as a mentor, you want to have the characteristics that they have when you are a senior or when you are about to graduate. Mentoring had a huge impact on me. It was not just one person. There were a number of others who I could not name all of them if I wanted to. There were some who were my skin color and some who were not my skin color. At the end of the day, whether it is college or whether it is a job, whether it is a church, I do not care what it is; we are going to need mentors. Mentoring is always going to be around in every aspect, every avenue. So like I said, it's always wise to choose someone who you see having characteristics that you would like to hold or maybe in a position that you would like to hold. Then it is also wise to definitely take the good but also take the bad and understand the negative things. If there is something negative that you see in a person or in an organization or in anything, when you get into that level, you remember the way it made you feel and you remember the things that you went through so that you will not make those same mistakes, however that might be.

Summary

This narrative depicts Christopher as a mature and dedicated student. Christopher has had different opportunities to get involved in mentoring relationships, even before starting to attend college. He mentioned participating in mentoring opportunities through church for example (Lincoln, 1989; Hill, 1971; Milner, 2006). He speaks to both types of

mentoring with a faculty/staff member and with peers and explains the advantages of both. For him peer mentoring is informal and is important because it is about sharing life in general and sharing for the specifics of college life in terms of helping each other succeed academically (Henriksen, 1995; Smith, 2007). He is aware that traditional male roles and perceptions are a big obstacle to mentoring when Black men initially get to campus because men are not supposed to ask for help (Heath, 1998; Lee, 1999). Christopher also explains about the importance of faculty and staff mentors who check up on the students and provide assistance and connections. These relationships have value during college life and after and are more formal. He is a good example of development through mentoring relationships (Klopf & Harrison, 1981) as he has faced the many stages and rhythms in the growth generating process of mentoring, and the mentee of the year award he received is also proof of this.

Chapter Discussion

The participants shared the stories of their journeys up to this point. They provided very personal information regarding their family, upbringing, and experiences. When viewed collectively the data provides a positive picture that opposes a lot of the negative stereotypes that are usually associated with Black males. I felt it was important to note the commonalities amongst the participants. Four of the eight participants were raised in a two parent household. Family environment issues such as undereducated parents and living in single parent homes are believed to impact the achievement levels of Black male students (Mandara, 2006). It is good to see such a high percentage of these participants raised with both of their parents. Based on what the media portrays you would be inclined to not expect that from this group (Harper, 2009). The participants

who were raised in single parent households serve as mentors to their peers at a higher rate than their counterparts who were raised in two parent households.

Four of the eight participants have a parent who has earned a degree. Among these four parents there are three who have earned bachelor's degrees and one who has earned an associate's degree. These numbers are high when you consider the media tells us that Black males are more likely to be first generation college students (Thayer, 2000; Ross-Gordon, 2005). Family has played a large role in the participant's decisions to pursue higher education. Seven of the eight participants were encouraged and/or supported to attend school by their family members. This support came from parents, siblings, and cousins. All of whom were equally important. This highlights the importance of family and familial capital as described by Yosso (2005) in her work on Community Cultural Wealth. The one student who did not cite family as providing him support was a star high school athlete. He went to college on an athletic scholarship and always knew he would go to college because it would allow him to continue playing sports.

The mentor that you choose or are paired with determines the type of mentoring that you will receive. Students should be wise when they make this selection. Researchers have begun to pay close attention to the matching process especially in formal mentoring programs (Beard, Bayne, Crosby, & Muller, 2011). Each of the participants shared their definitions of mentoring and there were many similarities. This was especially true in regards to support and development. In regards to support, the participants noted the importance of the mentor allowing them to learn from their mistakes. This will hopefully help the student to refrain from making similar mistakes.

This shows growth and experiential learning. Once these experiences take place the students begin to process them and learn from them. There were two variations of this in the data. There was a group of students who learned directly from their own experiences like Dominique. There was also a group who wanted to learn from the experiences of the mentors in addition to their own experiences. This provides a different level of enrichment for the mentee and also allows the mentor to help them not make the same mistakes as they did which enriches the mentors experience as well.

Some participants like having a mentor to listen to their issues. The mentor can simply show support by being available and listening. One participant spoke about having a mentor who will be there no matter what. This type of support has had a positive impact on the lives of these students. The sentiments about support were shared across the board by the participants. This is clearly an important aspect of mentoring to this group of students.

The students also benefitted from the developmental aspect of the mentoring relationships. Participants spoke about mentors developing their confidence for success. If the mentor can get the student to believe in themselves then that is the first step towards success. Another participant shared a similar view; he felt that the mentor betters you as a person. That can happen in the form of helping to build the students self-confidence or by helping the student achieve their goals as mentioned by another participant. The participants once again shared similar views and felt for the most part that the mentor should be someone willing to give and receive advice; they should not be someone who just preaches at you. The mentor can play a major role in helping the student grow and develop. The value of this role should not be underestimated.

The participants were asked to provide information about their mentors both past and present. Six of the eight participants had males as their first mentors. This goes against the popular opinion that there is a lack of males to help groom young Black males. The participants were mixed about the concepts of having women as mentors and about having mentors of opposite races. There were some participants who felt that they could learn from anyone who was willing to take the time and help them to grow and develop. Other participants felt it necessary to have a male role model who could help them learn how to be a man while some felt that the mentor just needed to be Black so they could relate to their experiences. This once again provides a look at how important the selection or matching process is in mentoring (Weinberg & Lankau, 2011).

Through the data it became clear that the participants valued both peer and traditional faculty and staff mentoring relationships. They also acknowledged the major differences between the two. The participants felt that peer mentoring was more informal and allowed them to do extracurricular activities such as going to parties together. The traditional mentoring relationship to them is thought to be more formal and with someone who is older (Henriksen, 1995). Every one of the students mentioned peer mentoring. This was supported across the board and it was very popular for multiple reasons. Some students liked it because of its role as an accountability source. Others were fond of it due to the twenty four hour access they had to their peers and the more intimate nature that it has. The eight participants in this study had very meaningful mentoring experiences. The narratives give voice to their stories and show how they have been and continue to be impacted by the phenomenon of mentoring.

I feel very strongly that everyone should have mentors. This is especially true when it comes to undergraduate Black men. This belief is a result of my own personal experiences when I was an undergrad and the impact that I have seen mentoring have on the lives of these eight participants and countless other Black men during my time in college and working in the university setting as a professional. Similar to Klopf and Harrison's (1981) definition of mentoring I feel that it is a process with multiple stages and rhythms. The lack of a definite method to the madness when it comes to mentoring is problematic to some but I embrace it. To me it provides a flexibility that allows each mentoring program or relationship to be unique and cater to the needs of the participants. Each of the eight participants in the study is unique and though their idea of mentoring had similar concepts their ideal situations would differ to some extent. The transmission of knowledge is central to mentoring (Stewart & Kruger, 1996; Ardery, 1990). I find this to be especially true in situations where Black male students are in new and unfamiliar environments, i.e. college. Having someone to talk with and confide in can be crucial. The development of these relationships are essential and can help the students feel at home, like there is someone who has a vested interest in them, who feels that they can be successful, and who holds them accountable (East, 1987; Jacobi, 1991). This is why I feel that mentoring is so necessary and has been such a helpful tool for this group of students.

CHAPTER V

ACCESS TO FORMS OF CAPITAL AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

This chapter documents the participant's access to various forms of capital and the experiential learning product of their participation in mentoring programs offered by the university. Specifically, I present the study participants' access to cultural capital, social capital, and navigational capital in light of Bourdieu's (1986) and Yosso's (2005) work. Next, I present findings on the study participants' experiential learning using Kolb's (1984) work and the impact these experiences have had in their college life.

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1986) defines cultural capital as the knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, preferences, linguistic styles, and skills that distinguish one group from another and are passed from one generation to the next. As Black undergraduate males, the research participants are from a minority group on campus; they are aware of this reality and mentioned it often in their stories. The struggles these men face to integrate into the university setting while still maintaining ties to their culture were evident and manifest in different ways. When referring to his experiences Christopher stated that,

Mentoring helps me to understand the culture of Black men who come from various cities and neighborhoods. Maybe he left some of his boys back at home like I did. It helps me understand what we have to do to stay true to where we came from, but also go somewhere and become something better than who we

were when we left. That is a constant struggle. That is something that I try to balance between even nowadays with the leaving of homeboys, relatives and stuff like that. You still have to be true to them but at the same time, you left for a purpose and you had to become something greater. You had to learn new things to broaden your horizon. So that is what happens at college, but balancing that is definitely a struggle for young men like me.

Christopher brings up a situation that many Black male students are faced with. On one hand they are in college and trying to better themselves; on the other hand, they have left home and their old neighborhoods in order to do so. This can cause uncertainty for the student and create tension either from others or self-imposed. Their family and friends may think that he has betrayed or abandon them or that he wants to forget where he comes from. In addition, this transition adapting to campus life can be very difficult because as the student integrates they can find themselves in the middle of two worlds and feeling that they do not belong in either. Christopher talks about how his mentor has helped him. Having someone who has gone through a similar situation can be beneficial in this case. The next example is provided by Camden as he remembers how the lack of people who looked like him and shared his culture has impacted him.

We definitely have to be strong on a campus like this because we tend to miss out. I think when we cannot find what we are looking for as far as our culture and other brothers on campus, we tend to act out. We tend to act like someone we are not. We try too hard to please other people, and you get real lonely. I thought I was going to transfer to an HBCU. I was like, Man, I'm going to Howard. This

was not working for me but I met my mentors and I am still here and starting my senior year.

Camden's experience is very common for Black men on college campuses where they are the minority. They may not have a strong support system and as a result they "act out" for attention, respect, or for other reasons. Acting out can happen in the form of violence against other students, not attending or causing disruptions in class, and other things of that nature (Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000). Some students entertain the idea of transferring to an environment where they will no longer be the minority and can find an abundance of students as well as faculty and staff members who look like them and that they can relate to.

Deion discusses another experience that opened his eyes. He learned about the history of his campus and that was helpful for him to start appreciating his campus community.

Until this past year I did not know my institution was actually segregated at a time in history. From one of my mentors I found out that this university used to be segregated and the history of it. We actually met one of the first Black students that attended school at the time of desegregation of the campus... It was definitely a humbling experience to see someone who pretty much made history and laid the foundation for me to be here. It opened my eyes to the Black community here as far as getting involved and seeing everyone and seeing that everyone has a different background. Despite our differences we can all come together and have a good time. I feel like it has just really exposed me to the Black culture here and made me much more appreciative.

This opportunity meeting one of the pioneer Black students on campus was important for Deion to realize the value of the Black community on campus today. It made him aware of the fact that pioneering students of color faced different forms of racial discrimination (individual, institutional, and social, see Harris, 1999) while opening the door and preparing the terrain for Black students who attend white institutions today. As a matter of fact, the integration of Black students occurred in 1963 when four young African American women registered for classes as a result of the U.S. District Court order. After formal application, a formal rejection letter, a lawsuit and a court order for the university, these four students were able to matriculate (Charles, Holt, & Mayo, 2003).

In the next example Dominique tells about his mentor's work educating students like himself about Black culture and the past. In turns, these interactions have challenged him to become more cognizant of the role that culture plays.

My mentor is a minority as well. He gives these presentations to students and sometimes he would ask my opinion about them. Watching those presentations and seeing what he does to help minority men combat the way society treats them has opened my eyes to a lot. In high school I really did not care about the culture thing. It really was not on my mind. My mentor, he forces me to pay attention to it. He lets me know what my culture was like in the past and he keeps me in tune with it. The fact that both of us are minorities allows us to talk freely and share stories.

Dominique comes from an environment where the majority of the people he was around looked like him. There was no lack of opportunities to interact with likeminded people who shared a similar culture. When he arrived on campus it became a bigger issue.

According to existent literature (Milner, 2006; Tillman, 2004), having mentors, teachers, and role models who share the student's racial group is beneficial since these individuals may have a better understanding of black students because they share a similar history, or because they have lived similar experiences and can see the world in ways similar to their students

David shared a similar experience than Deion and Dominique. He speaks to the need for black students to get to know about history of their culture and history of Blacks in education.

I would say mentoring has impacted me in a huge way. Being at a predominantly white university, you hang out with different people and you get to understand their cultures and all that they consist of. The negative to that is that there are not many people continuously teaching you about your culture. If you do not know about your history, then there is no way that you can progress. This is where the mentors come in to help educate us. Some of the life lessons are better received from them because you can relate to them a little more than a professor who you only have for class in most cases.

This example illustrates another important role of the mentor as a more knowledgeable individual who has lived longer and can educate young men about the role of history in the education that Blacks receive today in higher education (Blackwell, 1989). College is a pivotal time in these young men's lives. The independence they experience allows them to explore who they are and what they believe in. A mentor can help with this development by providing insight and challenging the student's narrow view about life

and the role of education. Likewise, Jordan talks about the meaning of “black culture” and what it entails from his point of view.

Mentors help you get to understand that you are not alone and that you are not the only one going through this culture change. For me everything is black culture. Times that I have had in that neighborhood, in that high school, on that football team, on that sports team, with that girlfriend. It can be anything ranging from home life to things that are happening here on campus. That is culture, period. That is what I feel. I will admit it is nice knowing you have things in common with someone whether it is a mentor or a peer mentor.

Jordan considers everything that he has done in the past to have been entrenched in Black culture. He is from a predominantly Black neighborhood and this was reflected in his high school. The majority of the students in the schools he attended have always talked, dressed, and been raised the same way. When he arrived on campus he found himself in a school environment where he was the minority for the first time. He benefitted from relating to other students and mentors who have gone through similar experiences adapting to the campus culture in a university where diversity is still in process of taking place (Beard, Bayne, Crosby, & Muller, 2011).

In the following example, Kenneth tells us about his neighborhood and the negative influences he had there and the wrong perception of what success for a black man was. However, this perception of Black culture for men needed reevaluation when he met his mentor.

I think this has been the biggest impact, because coming from my neighborhood all you see are dope dealers, hustlers, and gang bangers. I grew up believing that

was what all Black men did. I actually have friends back at home that still think that those are the only options they have. When you meet a positive Black male who is doing something with his life other than one of those things it can be a shock. My mentor literally told me within the first week of meeting him, “You’ve got it in your mind that to be successful you’ve either got to go to the NBA or play some professional sport or sell dope. I’m going to show you a whole different world.” I did not believe him until he actually showed me. I saw that you could still be cool and get even better girls by doing positive things, making high grades, being involved in campus, and giving back to the community. Prior to college, I looked at our culture as males and thought if you worked in an office or something similar, you wanted to be white. Now I see that there are people that come from similar places as I did who decided to do the right thing. That is a real good feeling. It lets me know that I can make it and people who are coming up after me can make it also.

Kenneth’s testimony is a frequent phenomenon documented in the literature. Cook and Ludwig (1997) explain “acting white” as a person’s perceived betrayal of their culture by assuming the social expectations of white society; in this case acting white would refer to becoming a successful student in a predominantly white college. Similarly, Ogbu (2008) states that “acting White” is a label for Blacks who display characteristics that some members of the Black community associate with Whites such as talking properly, dressing up, and changing the group of people to socialize and include people of a different social and educational status. In the example, Kenneth talks about understanding the difference between wanting to succeed and giving up his culture. It is

not about forgetting who he is or where he comes from but about looking for positive role models in his Black community to imitate and achieve the goal of graduating from college and making a career for himself.

Summary on Cultural Capital

The purpose of this section of the chapter was to discuss the access to cultural capital that undergraduate Black males have through their mentoring experiences. The examples provided by the study participants illustrate the connection to Bourdieu's (1986) definition of cultural capital as encompassed knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, preferences, linguistic styles, and skills that distinguish one group from another and that in this case the students can receive and learn from their mentors. There were several main points that were discussed that establish the connection between cultural capital and the role of mentoring and mentors. The first was the act of leaving friends and family behind. Tinto (1993) encourages this as a means to help the student be successful in their new environment. The students however talk about the difficult situation this puts them in. It is hard for them to focus solely on being a member of this new environment or community and turn their back on where they come from and the people they left behind. Even if this is not the student's intentions it can be perceived that way. This can be a difficult dual state for some students to deal with and it can lead to them acting out as a cry for help or assistance. This can take place in various forms and can also be used to gain respect and or attention (Lewis, Chesler, & Forman, 2000).

The participants really appreciate when mentoring provided the opportunity to use the past as a tool to educate themselves and others. This includes learning about the history of Blacks and their struggles to gain entry into institutions of higher education.

The program that Deion refers to about meeting the Black lady who integrated the institution provides embodied capital that has helped to enrich his experience. The student's experiences have helped prepare them to deal with the expectations of society and to be ready to break the stereotypes that have been placed on them by some. The experiences have helped provide an understanding of the meaning of culture. This was important because initially their opinions had been shaped by what they saw and what others told them. This included opinions that were detrimental in some cases. One participant thought that pursuing education as a path for success equated with "acting white" (Cuyjet, 2006). These experiences aided the students in finding and developing an identity that bridges both past and present to prepare them as Black males for future success.

Social Capital

Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 249). In the study these can refer to mentors, peers, family members, and community members connected to any of the aforementioned individuals. Likewise, Yosso (2005) explains social capital as the networks of people that can provide various types of support to navigate society and also the knowledge and understanding nurtured and passed on through relationships with networks of peers and friends. The purpose of this section is to provide the examples offered by the study participants on how their mentoring experiences have facilitated their access to and enhanced their social capital.

The first example is provided by Christopher; for him developing social connections was a slow and frustrating process initially. This example speaks to developing social capital through connecting with peers.

The connections we are making, they are really true connections. I can remember my first couple of years here when I was working as a waiter. I would be upset because I was there six nights out of the week, and I would see the guys coming through there to eat. I saw them chilling, laughing, talking, and I was like, “man, I am missing out, where are my homeboys?” I did not have that group of friends here then but I needed it. That desire to make new friends got so bad that eventually, I would not even be waiting on their table but I would walk by and ask, “Hey man, what are you all doing here? What are you all involved in on campus?” They invited me out to some different organization meetings. I was frustrated because while they were telling me the meeting times, in the back of my mind I was thinking about how I had to work on each of those nights. It was definitely important for me to meet them and to make friends here. Those relationships are what get you through. When you see your homeboy make it, it shows you that, “Okay, we were in the trenches together. If he can make it then I can make it.”

The process of establishing a social network was difficult for Christopher because of the fact that he was working full time to put himself through college. He had to work harder to make those connections because he did not have an abundance of free time. He was able to watch other Black men be successful. They served as role models for him. He was able to talk with them and learn the things that worked for them. It also provided

more incentive for him to finish because if they could do it, so can he (Good, Halpin, & Halpin, 2000).

Camden shared a similar experience that highlighted the need to establish those social networks due to the impact they can have.

We really do need each other's help to be successful here. You arrive here at this school of 30,000 plus students and you probably only see I would say six or seven brothers. I remember for me personally I did not think I would see my first black person until like my second week. It is crazy, but when you have mentors, they help put you in contact with other people who are going through the exact same thing. That is a major factor as a member of such a small community on campus.

We are able to support each other and make this place feel more like home.

Camden speaks about the population of the institution. It is a large school but yet he does not see very many people who look like him. There are days when you can walk on campus or go to class and be the only Black male around. Finding a faculty or staff mentor will allow them to put you into contact with other students who can help develop the social networks. Peer mentors can also be members of that social network for students.

Dominique shared an example regarding his experience and the resulting growth that highlights what can happen when the student gets comfortable in the new environment and begins to have a change of perception.

Not sticking to what has been the norm for you can be beneficial. Back at home, I hung around Black people primarily. When I got here, I saw that there were not many Black people at all and I was encouraged by friends and mentors to go out

and network with others outside of my comfort zone. I had to talk to people of other ethnicities and races. This step which seems like something so simple helped to lead to my growth and development. Now I encourage other students to challenge themselves. Do not stay in your comfort zone. Go out and have new experiences and meet people from different walks of life.

Dominique was encouraged to meet others and that is very important. Students who come from a predominately Black background need to get comfortable socializing and interacting with others. It is important that they develop the social capital needed to be successful in any environment. Having a diverse social network will help to make that possible (Portes, 1998).

Organizations on campus serve as a valuable source of social capital for students. David feels his fraternity has and will continue to open many doors for him in regards to this area.

It provides a lot of involvement and access. I have the ability to go and talk to one of my staff member mentors. What starts out as just a simple conversation can easily turn into a lesson for me about some of the things that are going on. Students are not always privy to the information of what is really going on behind the scenes on campus. The faculty and staff are more likely to have that knowledge and when they do they usually view it from a different perspective. It is nice to know people who are willing to share that information and who can walk you through what its implications are for you.

Involvement in these organizations provides an opportunity to develop relationships between the students and the advisor (Astin, 1999). This is a valued point of access for

both the students and the professionals. These relationships can lead to the exchange of important ideas and information. This also allows the student to discover how things impact them from someone who can provide a differing perspective.

Deion feels that the social capital he gained from peer mentor relationships have helped him to be successful and have fueled his desire to help others be successful as well.

You only have yourself to blame for being stagnant and not moving forward. The keys that truly make you successful are when you have that drive, ambition, and then you also surround yourself with the right people. That is what a lot of us upperclassmen did. We surrounded ourselves with the right people, and the underclassmen and even some of our peers look up to us and they say, "Oh I want to be like that group of students because they are handling their business, they are involved, and they are making moves on campus." That is such important advice for all incoming freshman and specifically with Black males. Being that our numbers are so low when the freshmen arrive there can be a tendency to do things on their own. Some of these men attempt to establish themselves as an alpha male. They need to know that the other brothers on campus are not a threat. We want to help them be successful just as the older brothers did for us.

Deion was able to find a group of students who were like-minded and wanted to be successful. This group of students helped to motivate and inspire each other to reach their goals. Matriculating through college is a tough task and it is an even harder thing to do without any help. It is important for the students to develop strong friendships and social networks (Pyles & Cross, 2008).

Jeffrey speaks very highly about his position as a student worker. He feels that it allowed him access to invaluable information and the opportunity to form helpful relationships with his peers and with the professional staff members who were his supervisors.

I have become a lot more knowledgeable about the university and its resources through being a student employee. I was supervised by a professional staff member who helped me grow and develop. Students see us in these positions and come to us for assistance. This is not unique to my position but happens with other student leadership positions as well such as the orientation leaders. Even though we might not think of ourselves as mentors, some of the students see us in that role. They feel that by the nature of our positions and the process we went through to obtain them that we must know a lot of information about the university and can help them get to where we are.

Jeffrey and his experience as a student staff member provided him access to professionals who served as mentors to him similar to the way that organizational membership did for David. Jeffrey is sought after by fellow students to assist them with things. He is viewed as a mentor due to the nature of his position. He notes that this is a common experience that other student leaders deal with as well.

When Jordan reflects on his experience and how he met a lot of the people that he knows he realizes that his mentor helped expose him to a lot of things socially,

Meeting my mentor led to me eventually meeting a bunch of other people. It seems like the people that I have met as a result of that relationship have helped me in various ways. It has not only been through talking to me but the help has

ranged from topics as common as financial issues to those as personal as spiritual ones. Whatever I have needed, the social network that they helped me establish is something that has benefitted me. There are even times when I go places or apply for different scholarships or positions and I hear people say “oh yeah, you are this persons mentee, right?” It has been a huge help.

Jordan has benefited greatly from establishing a strong social network. There are many ways to do this but Jordan used the assistance of his mentor. This broadened the scope of the people that he came in contact with at the institution. The saying “it is not what you know but rather who you know” comes to mind here. Jordan speaks about going places and being recognized for his connections to someone else (Dika & Singh, 2002). This happens very often and is a sign of social capital at work. It is very important for Black men to establish these networks and then to use them so that they can work to even the they playing field as far as opportunities go.

Kenneth shared a story that was very similar, where he benefited from the reputation of his mentor.

My mentor, he was a person whose name carried weight on campus. He was very well regarded at our institution. He made sure to introduce me to the majority of the people that he knew. People I would probably never have built a relationship with otherwise. Thankfully I met him and he decided to take me under his wing. That was definitely beneficial for me. To this day I am still meeting good people that are doing some positive things with their lives all as a result of my relationship with him.

Kenneth talks about relationships he was able to establish through his connection to his mentor. When we meet people we never know exactly what can come from those situations. In this example even though it is years later that relationship continues to be beneficial. It still serves as a source of social capital (Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003)

Summary on Social Capital

The power of social networking has been advanced dramatically by the advancements in technology and the popularity of social media. It is easier to make connections with people and stay in touch than ever before. Some may also argue that this increase in technology also led to the decline of true interpersonal relationships. We can be people's "friends" on Facebook and read their posts or follow them on Twitter. This may make us feel as if we are connected and know someone when they could really be someone totally different. Putnam (1995) suggests that for various reasons, life is easier in a community that has a greater stock of social capital. The majority of the students who participated in this study do not come from communities where this is the case. It is vital to their success that they are able to have experiences that provide them with the social capital needed to be successful while at college and for the rest of their lives. Bourdieu (1986) identifies many of the practices thought of as rites of passages in colleges or institutions as ways to develop the useful relationships needed to develop social Capital. The participants in this study attend a very large institution where there are endless possibilities in terms of developing a network of connections. This provides an opportunity for them to enhance their social capital seeing as how the literature tells us that being from an underrepresented group they likely have less access to social networks and thus have lower social capital (Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003). As illustrated by

Stanton-Salazar (1997) these newly formed social networks function as lifelines to resources that permit low-status individuals to overcome social structural barriers and to experience healthy human development, school achievement, and social mobility, thus showing their importance to this particular group of students.

Navigational Capital

This form of capital can be used as students try to find ways to be successful at their institution and leave with a degree. Yosso (2005) defines navigational capital as “the skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Historically, this infers the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind” (p. 80). It is important for people of color who have successfully navigated through these types of institutions to help younger students accomplish that same goal. Christopher recalls the mentor relationship he established early in college helping him out up until this day,

My mentor has helped me so very much. My being able to connect with somebody like him led to me meeting people in the career services department. A lot of students do not know about all of the help and services you can get over there. So many people are getting degrees now and that puts even more emphasis on being prepared. I definitely think I have an advantage because of the people that I have been able to meet and get mentored from. You start learning about all kinds of different services that the university offers that you may not have utilized otherwise and those can be really helpful to your success.

Christopher found out about services that are offered through the university from his mentor. There are so many students who spend 4 to 6 years on campus and have no idea about all of the resources that they have at their disposal. These services and others are

offered to ensure that students are successful. It can be difficult for students to seek help sometimes especially when they do not know it is available (Yosso, 2005). While most departments advertise, an extra effort should be made to make these resources available to first generation and underrepresented groups.

Camden came to college as a student who described himself as rough around the edges. He credits his mentors with laying a foundation for his success.

Your mentors help create your network and your status. As students not many of us realize and understand the full potential that we have. Your mentors help you tap into that. An effective mentor will plug you in with the right people left and right. They push you to have a substantial role, to do something that can impact a wider range of people. Great mentors put you in positions that you may not want to be in at the time, but that you will learn to love and respect when you are there. I remember my mentor took me to a board meeting and I was just like, “What in the world?” I was lost at first but then I started shaking hands and meeting all these people. This experience comes in handy today when I have to preside over my fraternity meetings. It also helped when I was a senator on the student government. It prepared me to be comfortable when I found myself in similar situations in the future. Also, who would have known that a few of the people I met in that board meeting would become additional resources and mentors for me down the line?

Camden speaks to the role of mentors seeing potential in their mentees and pushing them to be successful. He mentions the concept of being placed in uncomfortable situations (Oropeza, Varghese, & Kanno, 2010). While this does not seem pleasant at first he

admits that it led to his growth. Once trust has been formed in the relationship the mentor can really challenge the student. By this time they should know each other well enough to know how to push the right buttons.

Deion is a very unselfish person who really wants to help everyone around him be successful. He feels that information he learns from his mentor is important because he turns around and shares that information with other students.

I really do take heed of all the advice that I get, and I try to spread it to as many people as I can. That is why I feel people look up to me. Like my friends, I feel like myself and my roommates, we are some of the upperclassmen that people like and they respect and that is really big in my book. They respect us because they know that we are here for them and that if they need things that they can come to us. If they are trying to figure out how to do things they can come to us for that as well. We have helped people get involved on campus, find jobs, and other things of that nature. This just seems like the natural thing to do because someone was there for us and taught us how to do these things so we have to pay it forward.

Deion is well respected on campus and he is a true peer mentor. There are countless students on campus who consider him to be their mentor. He has been very successful and as a result he wants to help as many other students be successful as possible. He is a great story of a student taking advantage of his resources and beating the odds to be successful (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

Dominique is student who has learned how to navigate the academic system from his mentors.

My mentors have introduced me to numerous people. They have introduced me to faculty and staff and I still have relationships with them today. I can go up there and talk to them in their offices. It helped me to be more comfortable in the classroom setting and when networking. It is just as much about who you know, as it is what you know in this world today. I had heard that many times over but it is just something about the way my mentor says it. It sounds like such a powerful voice that resonates with me. Similar to the way that I hear my mother's voice in my head reminding me of life lessons that she has taught me.

The act of being introduced to a faculty member is something that seems so minor but it can play a major role in the life of a student. Seeing that the faculty members are regular people just like everyone does wonders for students. The faculty members hold so much power being that they determine what the student will learn and how they will be graded on their work. This can be intimidating to students. Dominique has been empowered just by being introduced to faculty and staff (Yosso, 2005). It is important that even the smallest things are not overlooked.

David is very appreciative of the history and perspective that his mentors are able to provide. He feels that a lesson learned from their experiences is one that he does not have to learn firsthand.

It has helped me establish myself because I know the people that I talk to for advice; they have been in the same situations that I am currently in. You have to take the mentors history and experience into consideration. They have been here longer than I have and so they know the ropes. With that experience they can offer me much more than I can offer myself if I was trying to go out and do

everything on my own. If you talk to the right people, which is something that is easy to do because most of the faculty and staff you work with in a mentoring program are wildly connected. You will have a nice networking system, not just now but also for when you graduate as well.

David enjoys the opportunity to meet with his mentors and to pick their brains. He asks a lot of questions and he wants to learn as much as possible (Campbell & Campbell, 1997). He not only learns from his experiences but the experiences of those who are around him. Many people view this as the essence of mentoring. The goal of the mentor is to help the mentee not make the same mistakes as they did and to help them accomplish all of their goals and dreams. Even if they can only share something simple with the student if it helps them at all then they have been successful.

Jeffrey credits his knowledge of the inner workings of his department for helping him gain the confidence to be successful.

In my student worker position I gained so much from my peer mentoring experience. You learn so much about yourself; what you are capable of currently, the capacity for things you are able to do in the future, how far you can go out of your comfort zone, and how to approach a person on any type of level. We go through an extensive semiannual training and we learn so much about the university offerings and how to help students be successful. Not only does this information help us but we can turn around and help others as well. When the academic year starts we already have this network and accompanying feeling of belonging and connection to the university so that was great.

Jeffrey has an experience that was similar to the one that Camden described. The primary difference is that Jeffrey's was fostered by his peer-mentoring relationships. He used his network of fellow student employees as a tool to grow and develop (Henriksen, 1995). The student employees were privileged to valuable insight and were very comfortable at the institution because as paraprofessionals they feel that they are a part of the team and really belong.

Jordan spoke of obtaining hope when he meets with his mentors. When he feels like things are slipping through the crack or there is too much on his plate he goes to meet with them for perspective.

My mentors help to put a finish line in front of me in my life. I feel like those who mentor me, they have crossed that line already. So whatever they are helping me with, I cannot tell them they are wrong on anything. It might not be the best for my situation but that method and approach is an example of prior success. I view it the same way with those people that I am mentoring. They really cannot tell me I am wrong on everything if I am closer to the finish line than they are. So as far as dealing with college life and mentoring, it has helped me to understand that the mentoring is great for preparation. It helps to have multiple perspectives so things I may have never thought of or experienced on my own will now be on my radar.

Jordan speaks of getting multiple perspectives which is something that is very helpful. No one person knows everything so it helps to have multiple sources. They can serve as checks and balances so to speak. It is important that the student makes their own

decisions however because they are the ones who will have to live with the consequences.

Summary for Navigational Capital

With the help of their mentors and peer mentors these students have managed to be successful up to this point and hopefully that continues to be the case. Everyone who participated in the study was at least a junior and is well on their way to completing their degree requirements. This is very noteworthy. Yosso (2005) identifies that there are stressful events and conditions that place these young Black men at risk of not doing well. The experiences that they had with their mentoring relationships have helped them to get to the point that they are at now. The process of talking with older students or their peers who are having success has helped them realize that they can be successful as well. The presence of faculty and staff mentors has helped provide the students a better understanding of the institution. This can serve as a blueprint or map to help the students navigate through successfully to matriculation. The important piece is that the students are taking the information that they gain and using it to help the other students be successful as well. As is the case with social capital, social networks are important factors to navigational capital as well. The difference between the two is navigational capital is drawn from the resiliency of people of color to continue to overcome barriers that are consistently encountered (Huber, 2009). The experience of the mentors and the learning that happens as a result of the participants mentoring experiences help them navigate successfully.

Experiential Learning

The following pages discuss the study participants' experiential learning based on the data collected on their self-reported participation in mentoring programs and mentoring relationships. According to Kolb (1984) learning happens when knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Kolb suggests a model that encompasses a four-stage learning cycle: Concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

Table 5.1 Connection Between Experiential Learning and Mentoring

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING	MENTORING
Concrete Experience: Students experience a direct encounter which gives them a common frame of reference	On site experience as a mentee Direct interaction with mentors Actual participation in mentoring programs
Reflective Observation: Students reflect on their experience and internalize their concrete experience	What does good mentoring look like? What are the characteristics of an effective mentor? What are some lessons learned?
Abstract Conceptualization: Students learn about the rules and strategies related to their experience. The instructor adds additional information to guide the framing of the experience within the rules	Programs mission and goals Participants' advice for other students Enhance the students' experience personally, academically, and professionally.
Active Experimentation: Students apply the strategies and rules to the activity and project	Students problem solving and facing tangible challenges Learning from mistakes made Serving as role models and peer mentors

Table 5.1 illustrates the application of the model and the experiential learning that took place due to the undergraduate Black male students' participation in mentoring

programs and mentoring relationships. Through the students' stories it became evident that they encountered each stage described in Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model. As a matter of fact, all the undergraduate students in the study were actively participating in mentoring relationships as protégés and most of their narratives describe the concrete experience stage. In regard to the reflective observation stage, the students were able to discuss, ponder, reflect, and provide answers to important questions such as what does good mentoring look like? What are the characteristics of an effective mentor? What are some lessons learned? They were able to provide answers to these questions and reflect through individual interviews, assign meaning for the self-selected artifacts, and a focus group where they could negotiate and share meaning related to the mentoring experiences. The stage of abstract conceptualization is also represented in the data. The mentoring programs helped students to learn about the rules and framed the student experience through the programs mission and goals. The students were able to draw on their learning and give advice to peers. The students reported that the faculty, staff, and peers serving as mentors aimed to enhance their experience in a holistic manner (e.g., personally, academically, and professionally). For the last stage, active experimentation, the study participants' narratives illustrate how they were able to serve as role models and mentor their peers by applying the knowledge acquired from being mentored. The following pages paint a picture of the study participants' experiential learning in light of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model.

Camden

Camden shares an experience that he had and learned from with the help of his mentor. This was truly a pivotal moment in his collegiate career.

My mentor happens to be a brother in my fraternity; however even before I even knew him on that level he was always challenging me. I always felt like I was never good enough. I wondered why I always had to work so hard. He taught me that life is challenging. You are not going to get anything easy in this world.

Anything worth having is worth the work. He taught and molded that philosophy into my life. Whenever I did something great, he did not give me huge congratulations because it was expected. He would say “that is what you are here to do.” When I did something wrong is when he would actually pull me aside.

He would say, “I understand that you made a mistake, but now you need to keep pushing forward.” He actually got me through one of the roughest situations that I ever had at this institution. It was my sophomore year when I lost my position as a student employee. That was the roughest moment ever. I thought the world was over. He got me out of it. I learned that the world did not end, and I knew that just because I made a mistake that it does not dictate the type of man I am going to be in the future. So, I kept my head up.

Situations such as this one are so very important when dealing with Black undergraduate men. Everyone makes mistakes but there is usually so much pressure put on these men by society and by themselves that those mistakes may be compounded. It is important that they have someone in their corner that can help turn these mistakes into positive learning experiences. This was a major turning point in Camden’s life. Thankfully he

had the support he needed and he stayed in school and went on to be a successful student and leader. He was able to learn from his experience, which Beard and Wilson (2006) call one of the most fundamental and natural means of learning available.

Camden remembers arriving on campus and how he learned so much by observing the other Black males on campus. He noticed that what they were doing was different from the way he carried himself in high school.

When you come to college and you are meeting other Black males that have determined the actual cool factor at the institution it changes everything. I can honestly say I was that high school student that sagged his pants, did not go to class, and was not involved. All I did was play sports. When I got to college I was a little rough around the edges but look at where I am at now. Being surrounded by a group of guys who feel that “cool” is being motivated, ambitious, and achieving can change your whole mind set about things. What truly opened my eyes was when I lost my student employment job. That was the moment where I had to determine what I going to do? Was I going to go back home and live because my mom was not going to pay for rent here or was I going to find a job, try to build bridges back, shake a couple of hands, work to pay rent and stay here. I chose to stay here, and through that mishap in the past I have made the proper moves to become who I am today.

Had Camden not been able to observe the positive role models and peer mentors he had on campus his situation may have ended up differently. He was able to look at things objectively, learn, and realize that he had to make some changes in the things that he was

doing. Once he decided to make those changes he received encouragement from his staff mentor. The different perspectives were very helpful for him (Santovec, 1992).

Camden believes that early involvement is a must in regards to helping these young men connect to the campus which is their new home.

As far as mentoring, the first thing I would tell a freshman to do is I would put them in contact with the staff mentoring guru. Then I would introduce them to a few other staff members. Then all of a sudden they would be making the same network and mentorship circle that it took me three or four years to make. Now all that is left is to put in some work. I would tell them to always be well educated. Always have a plan because being well prepared can get you through any situation.

Camden identifies that there are “go to” faculty and staff members when it comes to mentoring Black men on campus (Parker, 2004). He deems it necessary to get these men in touch with the new group of students as early as possible. His goal is to help them develop the network that he has but hopefully faster than he was able to establish it. This is very commendable and should be a huge asset for the students in their learning process.

Camden often reflects on his first semester on campus and he thinks of ways to help students avoid situations similar to the ones he ended up in.

Mentoring is definitely crucial. I think we need to get them as soon as they step foot on campus. You need to get them quick because my freshman year I was one of those wild freshman. While it is possible to have fun and get work done at the same time it is not easy. What happens is when you keep being that wild freshman you begin to develop this reputation. When you go around different

faculty and staff members they know you as that person and they could potentially write you off. That seems to hurt a lot of people coming into a PWI. The one thing that I have learned from my mentor is your reputation; that's your brand, that's who you are, that is everything. Once that goes downhill, it is really hard to get back to where you were. Future Black undergraduate students coming to campus should be told the rights and wrongs of college life to help them be successful.

Camden thinks that these ideas would be successful and he plans to use his fraternity as a vehicle to provide programs to help young Black males learn and develop life skills and meet other brothers on campus. He hopes that this will provide opportunities for these men to be successful and focus on the interactions between themselves and their new environment so that they can learn and grow from those experiences (Illeris, 2007).

Christopher

Christopher speaks about his experience in an academic department that lacks minority presence. This was something that had and continues to have an impact on him every day.

When it pertains to a PWI, there is a huge difference. Especially if it is at an institution that clearly lacks cultural diversity. We all can use mentoring, all ethnicities, all races need that, but there is definitely a difference on a campus like this. I believe in a lot of ways that if you are a part of the majority, you almost get that mentoring subconsciously to a degree. You see all these people who look like you and they are on the same path. You are with the status quo. Personally I am doing okay, but when I see that, I question where I fit in. I walk in the class

and I am the only person with my skin color, where do I fit in with this group? I am not being invited to participate in the study groups or other student led activities. How do I attach myself to it? That is when the mentoring is very important because then you have these feelings that come up of staying true to where you come from or am I losing my sense of who I am. It really comes into play when it is like that.

Christopher has wrestled with the experience of being a Black male in an academic department where he is clearly a minority. It is very common for him to be the only Black male in every course he takes each semester. When he looks around and sees other students working together and sharing information he realizes that he has to work harder to form those bonds because they do not happen naturally for him. He is not invited to be in study groups. He is not able to attend social events with his professors due to his work schedule. His experiences have taught him that he will have to work smarter and harder to be successful. He has found a support system of peers, faculty, and staff to help him learn from, combat and, deal with these experiences. Christopher is using experiential learning to raise awareness about multicultural or ethnic issues being faced on campus (Arthur & Achenbacher, 2002).

Christopher has learned from his mentoring experiences that transparency is a vital component.

The biggest thing is transparency, when you are able to be transparent with your mentor, and when your mentor is able to be transparent back with you a lot of growth can happen. When you are holding back and trying to figure out, can I say this to him or am I allowed to say this to him it can stagnate the growth.

Transparency helps to combat this. I remember when my mentor would tell me about some of his flaws and some of the things that happened to him going through college. I was like, okay when I make that mistake that does not mean the world is over. If he is still successful and he made that mistake, it lets me know that if I make similar mistakes then I can still be successful as well. So transparency is a huge part of being a mentor.

Christopher believes in the importance of transparency in the mentoring relationship because he has seen firsthand how it works to make a mentoring relationship successful. He has also seen some instances where transparency was lacking and how that altered the relationship. Being transparent allows for genuine experiences and those facilitate learning and growth for both the mentor and the mentee (Leon, Dougherty & Maitland, 1997).

Christopher wants to leave his mark on the campus and help those after him be successful. He feels as if his newly chartered Christian fraternity is the perfect vehicle to do so.

I want to make sure that, you know, by the time that I am graduating I am able to pass the torch and it is not just something that I was the only one able to benefit from. You know, I want to be able to come back years from now and see that this organization that was planted here by me and my line brothers is still going strong.

It is very important to these participants that they are taking steps to leave things better than they found then in regards to the experiences of the future undergraduate Black men.

This is very nice to see and it will be very promising if it is a trend that continues with future classes of students.

David

David has had experiences in three differing educational environments and in regards to diversity he shares what he has learned:

Before I became the man that I am today (though I am still growing) I feel like I went to some of the worst elementary, middle, and high schools. I was in a predominately Black district where there was not a white face in sight. It was as if Caucasians did not exist on my side of town. When my parents split, I had to transfer to a more diverse school, but it was still predominantly black. When I got to this institution where the population is majority White it was my third completely different experience. Having been in these different environments the one that I gained the most from and felt the most comfortable in were the years leading up to my parents' separation. I feel this way because the teachers who shared my culture seemed to care about Black students a little more than teachers of other ethnicities who could not relate to it. It was a tough adjustment to this environment when I arrived on campus. Having mentors and other students who look like me and were going through similar situations really helped me out.

The experience of attending a predominately White institution is provides a challenge for most students of color. It is compounded in David's situation where he comes from the complete opposite end of the spectrum. He does not feel the care that he felt at the institution where there was an abundance of students, teachers, and administrators who

looked like him and shared his cultural interests (Heath, 1998). David has found a support system of mentors that consists of both professional staff and fellow students that helped him cope with the adjustment and be successful in this environment.

David viewed himself as being mature when he arrived on campus. He thought he would just matriculate through college without any issues and not change very much.

Mentoring has helped me to grow as a person. Maturity is a mindset and I honestly thought like I came into this university mature enough, but I was being foolish. Here I was coming from high school thinking, “Well, I’m not going to get into any trouble. I’m just relaxing. Life has taught me a lot, and I’m real mature. I’ve got it. It’s cool.” But in college, everything is amplified times ten, and you really figure out things about yourself that make you more comfortable. It actually takes you out of your shell, because when you come to college it’s like you start over. It’s all about reshaping your name, giving yourself a new image.

David’s experiences on campus have caused him to reinvent himself. He has learned and grown over the course of his time in college. He has become comfortable with who he really is and accepts that.

Deion

When the topic of mentoring is mentioned one particular experience stands out in Deion’s mind:

I would say my mentor helped mold me into the leader that I am. One thing that I liked about him was that he was real and blunt. He would tell you about yourself. This really helped me to develop tough skin. I remember one time I put on a

button down shirt, but I did not have on a tie, he ripped me up about it. I did not understand why he made such a big deal out of it initially and honestly felt that he overreacted. It was not until the next major event took place where I needed to dress up that I began to understand what he did and why he did it. As I stood in front of the mirror getting prepared I thought to myself what would he think about my appearance and the way I am presenting myself. He had managed to work his way into my subconscious and impact my decisions without even being present. I learned from that experience and it continues to impact me until this day.

Deion was able to learn from this experience; when his mentor spoke with him about the way he was dressed he took it personally at first. He eventually got over it, but now when he is trying to decide if he is dressed appropriately he wonders what his mentor would say about it. He learned from that experience. The other experience was positive and taught him a valuable lesson about using his resources. He still recalls this experience very vividly. When he thinks of it he still reflects on the lesson he learned and the impact that it has had on him. The learning and growth occur in this situation as a result of his reflection and the other steps of experiential learning. Kolb and Fry (1975) mention how the learning may appear mindless to some. The experience alone does not provide the learning and growth the other steps must be present as well

Deion's reflection on mentoring really shows how powerful of a tool he thinks that it can be when both parties are truly invested.

The best scenario to me is when both the mentor and the mentee are comfortable because in the beginning there is a barrier. It is like you do not know what to say. It is almost like things are scripted at first until you get to where it feels more

natural. I want the people I mentor to know that if they ever need anything they can always come to me. That is the legacy that I would like to leave here at this institution. It is kind of funny just from being provisionally accepted here and people probably seeing me as someone that could not get into college and they probably thought I was not going to make it. Now I am in leadership roles in various organizations and very successful. It lets me know that I can make it, and that is what I try to tell other people. I owe some of my success to mentoring. I feel it is like magic. It just finds you. It can be very situational. In the summer enrichment program our mentors were assigned to us. I know there were some people that felt like they could not talk to theirs, but my mentor and I had some real conversations. It all just worked out.

Deion describes successful mentoring working like magic. That is a very telling statement; however it does not happen that easily. With a lot of time and dedication maybe all mentoring relationships can have similar results. The key component to Deion's mentoring relationship was when the barrier came down and the relationship really started to develop (Salinitri, 2005). This is when the learning began to take place. Deion tries to apply these same principles with the young men that he mentors as well.

Deion echoes a sentiment that was mentioned by Camden earlier about the importance of finding mentors for students as early as possible.

I think it is crucial to get mentors early. I got my mentors through the summer enrichment program and the African American leadership conference. It is important that we push on, especially the males because for the longest it seemed like the women were running the campus. Black women were planning

everything. They were even doing the All Male Conference, and that is absurd but there were no males who were trying to step up. It is important that we catch them at that early stage so that we can help them. They need to know that we are here on campus. We are taking care of our business to get that degree, but we are also making connections while we are here as well. We need to just keep pushing for more mentoring opportunities here. I know BSA has started a mentoring program and people have been notified recently about their mentees. We have to let people know, almost in a sense force it down their throat like you need a mentor. You may think you do but you do not know everything. You need someone that is going to help you throughout college. You only have yourself to blame for not moving forward. I feel that is what truly makes you successful when you have that drive and ambition and then you also surround yourself with the right people. That is what a lot of us did. We surrounded ourselves with the right people, and people look up to us and they say, "Oh I want to be like that group there because they were handling their business, they were involved, they were making moves on campus and stuff."

Deion actually touches on a few points that were made by earlier participants. It is vital to get these students involved early. It is important that they are tied in with their peer group and get mentors as soon as possible (Palmer, & Young, 2009). He mentions BSA and the mentoring initiatives that they have recently launched. There is a conscious effort to provide more access to mentoring for undergraduate Black males. It is important that they learn as much as they can as quickly as possible to help with the acclimation process.

Dominique

Dominique had a similar experience as some of the other participants in terms of observing his peer group. He sums it up by stating:

It is so impactful as a young Black male when you see other young Black males doing the same thing you are doing. We are coming to college, working hard, trying to get our education and degree to do better for themselves. It lets you know that it can be done and that you are not alone. There is strength in numbers and together we can accomplish more that we can as individuals.

Though there are not many Black males on campus Dominique and some of the other participants have been able to find a group that has helped them to be successful. This group of peers that each speaks of has been vital to their success both academically and socially on campus (Good, Halpin, & Halpin, 2000). Peer mentoring will provide opportunities to learn, grow, and develop. It provides an opportunity to meet more students and hopefully provide access to pockets of students similar to the ones they encountered who can challenge each other to be their best.

Dominique thinks that it is a very simple process to make that initial connection that could change a student's experience on campus.

Whenever you just walk into the quad, if you see someone that is either lonesome or troubled just reach out to them and talk to them. Sometimes that simple gesture will make their day. They could be sitting there bored or whatever. That could be a start of a great friendship or to that student turning things around and enjoying their experience here.

This is a simple principle that everyone can practice. It does not cost anything to do and the reward could be great. Everyone just has to get in the mindset of doing it. It can be difficult to do sometimes because everyone walks around campus with their headphones in and they seem to be in such a hurry. If you are able to reach and impact just one person, then that more than makes up for any unsuccessful attempts.

Jeffrey

Jeffrey has been a very observant student during his time on campus and he does not always like what he sees. This is especially true with regards to the demographic makeup of campus.

I think that mentoring is very necessary. When I first came here, the percentage of African-Americans was 3% and now it is around 11% so that is a good sign.

The underdog is coming up. I think that stems from people in the lives of the students advocating good things and just pushing them to go to school, be

successful, and start a promising career after school. This encouragement is a very necessary thing for Blacks, especially males, because we are the leaders.

Men have traditionally been seen as the leaders in our society. Then when you break it down to races, it is rare for Black men to be seen as a leader and we want to change that. We can learn those leadership skills by watching and talking to those who have been successful.

Jeffrey wants to see the Black males on campus step up and be leaders. Mentoring is a great way for the students to learn the skills that could help them in this area. This ranges from talking with mentors who advise groups to potentially shadowing fellow students

who are leaders. He also speaks about the rising percentage of African Americans (Allen, 1992). This excites him and he hopes that the number continues to grow.

Jordan

Jordan feels that his race is very important to his experiences on campus. He feels that it limits his pool of potential mentors.

I feel bad saying it but race does have some impact on mentoring because it comes down to a common bond. It is hard to look at a Caucasian sitting across from me asking me all these questions. I feel like I am a part of an experiment. Not to be racist, it is just that I feel personally like race plays a part in my initial comfort. I need to feel like I am talking to my grandmother, a family member, or someone I trust when I am sitting down talking about my problems, my struggles, my accomplishments and everything else happening in my life. If I do not feel like I am talking to that type of person, if I feel like I am just talking to somebody who is there just to call themselves a mentor to me, I do not think I will stick to that mentorship. If I do not feel like the mentor can relate to me then that is a huge problem. If you cannot relate to my past economic struggles, it's hard to continue that mentorship. If you cannot relate to the struggles I face just being a Black male, it will be hard to work with you. When it comes to the sex of the mentor, I do not think it matters. I feel a woman could help you accomplish your goals also. They are able to contribute a little more readily than men in most cases. With a woman you get the intellectual and you get the emotional. They can help you start thinking about life a little more deeply than the way most of us males just sit back and look at the surface.

Jordan brings up an interesting point about who is mentoring undergraduate Black men and how they feel about it (Blackwell, 1989). The mentoring dynamic between a Black male and Black woman may work best for some men because they did not have a male figure present in the home and feel more comfortable with a woman. The mentoring relationships they have with men of color take time to develop but when they do they can be very powerful. Jordan has learned a lot about himself and how to be a successful Black male in today's society through his mentoring experiences.

Jordan's view on the mentor and mentee pairing really boils down to the feelings of the mentee and their acceptance of the mentor.

A mentor has to be somebody that the mentee accepts. The mentee has to be ok with working with that person even if they were matched randomly. There should be something that they admire about them. The chances for success are higher when there is a mentor that is willing to meet the mentee where they are. From the initial meeting you should start developing that kind of bond where you can talk to that person. It is important to be open. It is especially important for them to not be afraid to tell you they made mistakes. This makes or breaks the mentor/mentee relationship because whatever that mentee does, they will have a checks and balances system. They will know it is okay to make mistakes, but they will also have somebody letting me know that they should still shoot for their dreams and use those failures as stepping stones.

Jordan brings up the point of a mentor being able to admit that they make mistakes and share those with the mentee. This will provide the mentee a set of different experiences to look at and learn from (Arthur & Achenbach, 2002). It also helps to take pressure off

of the mentee by showing them that they do not have to try and be perfect. That is impossible and only setting them up for failure.

Jordan acknowledges the importance of student organizations and their ability to serve as resources and mentoring hubs for students.

I think the best way to develop new mentoring relationships is through the student organizations. There is usually a group of upperclassmen and by default in some cases we serve as mentors to the freshmen along with the faculty and staff advisors. It is all about letting them know that you care and that you will be there whenever they need. This will improve the organization because of the tight bonds of the members. Others will also want to join your organization. “Oh well let me go to the meeting, I’ll probably see the advisor there and I can talk to him about some particular things.” This will provide mentors for the freshmen and also develop a culture where they will want to give back and do the same for the next group of freshmen.

Jordan sees the student organizations as a pipeline for mentoring relationships. They are a prime source for access to faculty and staff members as well as older peers, both of which serve as sources of valuable knowledge and resources (Astin, 1993). These organizations are appealing to students because there are so many. There are over 500 registered organizations on this particular campus.

Jordan has developed a plan to help students. He stresses the importance of academics. Though it seems that academics would be a focal point at an institution of higher education, however that is not always the case.

Incoming Black male students should get to know their surroundings and stay low key because that allows for more concentration on school. When you start your freshman year it is easy to find yourself out and about. The parties, women, and other temptations of college will always be there. It is important that they are introduced to the faculty and staff. Find somebody that reminds you of that person that you looked up to when you were younger. It is important for mentors to make yourself available and keep your phone on. Do not be behind the scenes. Be at the organizational meetings. Be in the quad. Be present on campus and see what is going on. There is probably a freshman that may be sitting in that room that needs you. Make yourself available to that group of people because somebody is going to need you. Show an open personality so that you are approachable. Help to develop that common bond so that person can feel comfortable with you.

Jordan speaks to access on the part of the faculty and staff members. He encourages them to really be available and meet the students where they are. He also thinks that being open and approachable can go a long way. This is true for all involved parties. He encourages the young Black men to avoid the party scene until they get acclimated to this new environment as it is easy to lose yourself in that element and not focus on your studies (Cuyjet, 1997; Heath, 1998; Lee, 1999).

Kenneth

When it comes to the topic of experiences Kenneth shared a very empowering story. It is the type of story that makes you feel good on the inside. Even more

importantly it is a story that could be used to help others who find themselves in similar positions and think it is impossible to turn things around.

I really do not have just one mentor. I mean, whoever I am venting to at the time then that is my mentor. A lot of people do not know about my first semester here. I had a 0.00 at the end of that semester. I did not know what I was going to do. I had four staff mentors who all kept me encouraged. It has helped me bring it up to a 2.6 in just a semester. A 2.6 is not high, but from a 0.0 to a 2.6 that is definitely progress. What the mentors have done for me in my life has been priceless. They have challenged me every day. When I won a pageant, I called my older brother and I was all excited like hey I won and all he said was okay. He feels like I am supposed to do things like that. It was completely different at the end of my first semester here when he heard my GPA. I was on the phone getting cursed out for two or three hours. I learned that when I do something I am not supposed to do, that is when they step in. When you do something expected it is like, "Okay well, it's not surprising."

Kenneth shares an opinion on his experiences that is similar to Camden. They both spoke of high expectations. The mentors expect them to accomplish things and do not throw praise at them for doing so. The mentors step in when there has been a shortcoming or negative experience. When this happens they help pick the student up and get them back on the right track. In Kenneth's case it was academically. They held him accountable and pushed him to do work more reflective of the type of student he really is. Kenneth openly shares his story with students to serve as a precautionary tale or words of

encouragement depending on their situation. He encourages them and reminds them that he learned from his experience and they can as well (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

Kenneth analyzed the experiences that he has had with mentoring relationships past and present, good and bad and he thinks that:

A successful mentoring relationship is 50/50. The typical person thinks of a mentor as someone to have surface level conversation with. A mentor to me is someone who has been somewhere and is continuing to go places in life. While on these journeys that mentor has been learning constantly. What makes a good mentor is how they use what they have gained. Now a mentor is not going to let you do anything crazy, but at the same time they are going to let you fall, and they are going to let you bump your head a couple of times. This is how you learn and grow. It is definitely a give and take relationship. Having commonalities with the mentor is very important. How do you expect me to listen to somebody who is a Caucasian male or someone who cannot relate to where I come from and what I have been through? I think it is important to have Black males mentoring Black males.

Kenneth brings up a point that was touched on by Jordan originally about who is serving as mentors for these Black men. Kenneth feels that he needs to have a Black male serving as his mentor so that they can relate and he can learn about being a Black male. His background has a lot to do with those feelings. He was raised in a primarily Black neighborhood, went to an all-Black high school, and attended an HBCU initially. His experiences here are really his first time interacting with teachers and potential mentors

from different races (Boykin & Toms, 1985). He could be potentially cutting himself off from a lot of people who could help him grow.

Kenneth believes in mentoring for the right reason. He feels that it has become the popular thing to do and that there are many people who do it solely for that reason.

I am not a mentor by name or by title but I know there are a lot of freshman that call me and ask random questions. I will answer their questions if I can or refer them to somebody. It is just that simple. I try to show them the importance of associating with good people. I was inspirational for me when I started surrounding myself with people who came from similar areas as I did but who at the same time are doing successful things in life. Therefore that shows me that it does not matter where you come from; it is all about where you end up. Just surround yourself with successful people, never be content. Never let “no” be an option.

Kenneth follows the trend that has been mentioned numerous times about surrounding yourself with good people. That has been a very important act that the majority of the participants have done. This really speaks to the power of the peer mentoring relationships and how important it is to establish those (Darwin & Palmer, 2009). These relationships should be formed for the right reasons of course as Kenneth would say.

Chapter Discussion

Having access to cultural capital relates to two different aspects, one is the culture the students bring with them and the other is the culture of the campus community they encounter when they start the collegiate process (Tillman, 2002). In particular the study participants explained that the experiences they had at the institution made them more

aware of their existent cultural capital and the cultural capital they needed to acquire or get understanding about. Several participants reported on the need to learn about the history of Black culture and the history of Black students having access to higher education during the desegregation time.

In relation to social capital the narratives provided by the study participants illustrate their participation in student organizations and student employment through campus departments (Astin, 1984). They talk about these opportunities and how they impact the broadening their networks. Peers who serve as mentors, along with faculty and staff mentors, serve to help the students develop social capital. By building relationships with peers that were participating in leadership positions they were able to establish more networks and connections with third parties who share similar interest or were able to take advantage of new opportunities for social development (Coleman, 1988). Mentors can be important in the formal development of social capital by introducing students to their own social circles. Student mentors have access to more students while faculty and staff mentors have access to other adults in positions of power that can benefit the career and resume building of the student. The narratives provided established a very close connection for both social and navigational forms of capital. At times it was hard to decide where one started or where the other finished. Through mentoring the students developed important skills, for example, learning to use resources available on campus career services, how to approach faculty members. They also learned about how to approach other faculty members and people who they needed to meet and did not know how to approach before having the assistance of a mentor.

The second part of the chapter reports on the experiential learning that was possible due to the students' participation in mentoring programs and mentoring relationships. The students explained that learning from experience meant not making the same mistake again; they also said that they wanted to be able to have the opportunity to make those mistakes, to learn about the consequences, to reflect, and to grow up as adults, to show the transition from being a high school student to being a college student. All of them agreed that they learned through building and maintaining relationships, Kenneth actually said that "relationships are priceless."

From collecting the students' narratives it became evident that participating in mentoring programs with faculty, staff, and peers offered them concrete learning experiences and lifelong lessons. All of the students were able to identify specific critical events and situations related to their participation in mentoring relationships that have contributed to their collegiate experience and growth. For example, they spoke about going through a process of adaptation and change. A few of the participants felt unhappy or as if they did not belong in the institution initially. Once the students became involved in mentoring opportunities and social organizations and other outlets; they started to view things from a different perspective and the university experience did not seem as bad. In other words, the students reported going through a positive learning experience; Kolb (1984) argues that the learners needs to consider other points of view for a change to happen so that a negative situation can turn into a positive one. Glenn and Nelson (1988) later added that considering an experience thoughtfully should influence future action. The goal of most mentoring relationships is to bring about growth and development; this

is done through thoughtful consideration or reflection on experiences which is especially helpful for this minority student group.

The study participants encountered each stage described in Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model. All of them were actively participating in mentoring relationships as protégés and as illustrated in the second part of the chapter, most of their narratives describe the concrete experience stage. While participating in the study and through discussions with their peers, the students had plenty of opportunities to reflect on their learning. For instance, study findings point out that the students' understanding of an effective mentor relates to a person who knows firsthand what the student is going through and explained that this was the main difference between faculty/staff mentors and peer mentors. Another important finding was that learning through experience also meant learning to be comfortable in your own skin, getting to know yourself, and learning about what questions to ask.

About the abstract conceptualization stage, the mentoring programs helped the students to learn about the rules to become successful in the college environment and framed their experience with the institution mission and goals. They were able to implement a logical analysis of ideas, act on their intellectual understanding, evaluate the outcomes, and advise on improvements at their institution (Dewey, 2007). For example, the students reported that the faculty, staff, and peers serving as mentors aimed to enhance their experience in a holistic manner (e.g., personally, academically, and professionally).

For the last stage, active experimentation, the study participants' narratives illustrate how they were able to serve as role models and mentor their peers by applying

the knowledge acquired from being mentored. They all talked about the learning that takes place when a peer shares knowledge. Active experimentation is the ability to get things done by influencing people and events through your actions (Kolb & Fry, 1975). The participants were upperclassmen and their actions had potential to directly impact their peers and underclassmen students.

In summary, this chapter presented study findings in light of forms of capital as described by Bourdieu (1986) and Yosso (2005). It also provides an analysis of the experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) product of their participation in mentoring programs and mentoring relationships. The next chapter highlights the main findings reported in this dissertation as related to the participants' perceptions about mentoring. It also provides a suggested model on mentoring best practices, describes the tensions and challenges faced during the implementation of the study, implications for practice, and ideas for future research.

CHAPTER VI

LOOKING FORWARD: A MENTORING BEST PRACTICES MODEL

The present qualitative case study documents the mentoring relationships and collegiate experiences of eight undergraduate Black males as well as their self-reported participation and access to mentoring. The research questions guiding the study are: What are the mentoring relationships and collegiate experiences of eight undergraduate Black males as well as their self-reported participation and access to mentoring? And the following three were supporting questions: What does mentoring look like for undergraduate Black males? What are their perceptions of mentoring relationships? How do these mentoring relationships impact their collegiate experience?

Data collection sources for this study include individual interviews, artifacts identified by the participants, a focus group session, field notes, and the researcher's journal. Narrative analysis served as the method for data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003) as data were collected through stories and accounts of the individual and collective experiences of the study participants. To this end, this dissertation provides two chapters for study findings, chapter four and chapter five. Chapter four introduces the eight Black male undergraduate students; I provide an account of their life histories, their stories participating in mentoring relationships, and a

synthesis of their perceptions of what effective mentors and mentoring relationships should look like.

Chapter five provides an analysis of the participants' mentoring experiences as they relate to capital theory and experiential learning. Specifically, I present the study participants' access to cultural capital, social capital, and navigational capital in light of the work of Bourdieu (1986) and Yosso (2005). Then, I discuss the participants' experiential learning using Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation).

The present chapter highlights the main findings reported in this dissertation as related to the participants' perceptions about mentoring. It also provides a suggested model on mentoring best practices, describes the tensions and challenges faced during the implementation of the study, implications for practice, ideas for future research, and final thoughts.

Highlights of Participants' Perceptions about Mentoring

This section presents a synthesis of what the study participants perceived as the elements that need to present in an effective mentoring relationship and the characteristics that a good mentor should exhibit. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 present statements provided by the participants illustrating this discussion.

Table 6.1 Summary of Participants' Perceptions of Mentoring

David	Dominique	Deion	Kenneth
<p>Mentoring goes beyond doing your job.</p> <p>Participating in mentoring helps you develop confidence for success. It betters you as a person.</p> <p>Looking for mentoring is a personal decision</p> <p>The mentor needs to have lived the same or similar experiences and it can be a peer. The mentor fulfills roles of friends and family</p>	<p>Mentoring is not about preaching to you but it is about letting you learn from your mistakes. It provides help to achieve one's goals.</p> <p>My father was my first mentor.</p> <p>Staff and peer mentoring are both important to have. They offer two different options; one is an older individual and is a formal situation. The peer mentor is of a similar age and you can do extracurricular activities with him like go to parties that you will not do with the older mentor.</p>	<p>Mentoring is helping someone in need and being there for them, listening and guiding them on the right path on how things should be done properly. The mentors help us to adjust to college and are a resource. He serves as an advisor for academic success. The mentor facilitates the networking system meeting people and identifying resources. Peer mentoring helps you learn how to be a successful student by following the good example.</p>	<p>A mentor is someone, regardless of sex who is willing to give and receive advice. Mother was my first mentor.</p> <p>S/he is someone who helps you in all aspects and sees you as a person not as an investment due to your skills, in my case my sports skills. S/he is not biased and gives genuine answers and advice.</p> <p>Peer mentoring has a greater impact as well.</p>

Table 6.1 Summary of Participants' Perceptions of Mentoring

Jeffrey	Camden	Jordan	Christopher
<p>The mentor should enable us to pursue things that we never thought we could do.</p> <p>My scoutmaster was my first mentor.</p> <p>The mentor is a role model; just a good influence in the mentee's life. He helps prepare the mentee to attain his goals for the future.</p> <p>Peer mentors help incoming freshmen set the foundations for the whole college career.</p>	<p>My stepdad was my first mentor. I participated in mentoring as a boy scout, also in Bridging the Gap in high school.</p> <p>Mentoring helps steering someone in a positive path but who you look up to can determine the type of mentorship you receive.</p> <p>A good mentor is not afraid to challenge someone and make them think of alternate options -Letting them know that there are always going to be consequences, for every action that they make, good or bad.</p> <p>The peer mentor can be your accountability partner and open your eyes to the bad things that can happen if you do not stay in the right path.</p> <p>Your mentor is your best friend throughout college.</p>	<p>A school teacher (an old lady) served the role of mentor during my last two years of high school.</p> <p>Your mentor tells you whether you are doing all right or not according to the expectations. He has to be "hands on" type of mentor. Mom is far away and she is the only one looking out for many of us.</p> <p>Peer mentoring is 24 hours a day. It is more intimate than the staff mentoring.</p>	<p>I was involved in mentoring before college through church.</p> <p>Mentoring is the act of just being there for someone no matter what...supporting someone who you know is trying to get where you have been or do what you have done.</p> <p>Peer mentoring is informal and is important. It is about sharing life and college life</p> <p>Faculty and staff mentors check up on you and provide assistance and connections that is why they are so important.</p>

Table 6.1 synthesizes the eight study participants' perceptions of mentoring and mentoring relationships. The purpose is to provide the reader with a descriptive visual using the participants' words so that they have the opportunity to draw their own conclusions and take a closer look about what can be learned in relation to mentoring of this specific population. The early mentors for the participants ranged from parents, to scoutmasters, to employees at their schools. The majority of the study participants were involved in mentoring relationships before college through family, friends, and other institutions such as school and church. These extended involvements have given them the ability to articulate the value and usefulness of mentoring programs. For example, they also established the difference between faculty or staff mentors and peer mentoring. Faculty and staff mentors are viewed by some participants as providing a more formal relationship and these mentors were usually someone who they were paired with through a mentoring program. They are usually older, provide their past perspective and experiences and varying levels of support that can range from academic, emotional, and social depending on the bond formed in the relationship. Faculty and staff mentors serve as accountability partners: they hold students accountable, help them develop confidence, and help them accomplish students' goals and at times are crucial in identifying opportunities that the students have not yet imagined.

Peer mentoring was reported as a very important aspect and the students described it as a more personal relationship. The students usually pick the peers who serve as their mentors so there is either an existing relationship there or characteristics that they have seen firsthand and seek to grow and develop themselves. Because there is no real hierarchy with their peers they are available to them and can be accessed in situations

(night life, in the classroom) and at times (late at night, weekends) when faculty and staff mentors may not be available. As reported by the study participants, upper classmen (students classified academically as juniors and seniors) serve as role models to students by serving in student organization leadership positions and just by being successful students matriculating through the university. One student said that his mentors played the role of family while he was on campus and away from his actual family members. This speaks to the importance that these roles can have in the lives of the students.

Mentoring Best Practices Model

The suggested best practices model (see figure 6.1) emerged as a result of study findings; the foundations for the model come from the participating Black male students' actual experiences with mentoring programs offered at their institution. The model brings attention to the role of experiential learning in the mentoring of undergraduate Black males and the importance for the students to have the opportunity to acquire and further develop forms of capital (e.g., cultural, social, and navigational capitals).

The configuration of the model requires examining the mentoring programs currently offered at the institutional level (curricular and extracurricular programs) in relation to access and participation. Having mentoring programs in place does not necessarily translate into student participation. It is important to ask questions such as are faculty members and staff actively participating in these programs? Do students have access to these programs or are these programs for just a few who get invited? I recommend the reader to look at the model in terms of the following three comprehensive stages: Admission, enrollment, and graduation; these constitute the schooling process of any student seeking a degree.

Best Practices Model for Retention and Graduation of Undergraduate Black Males

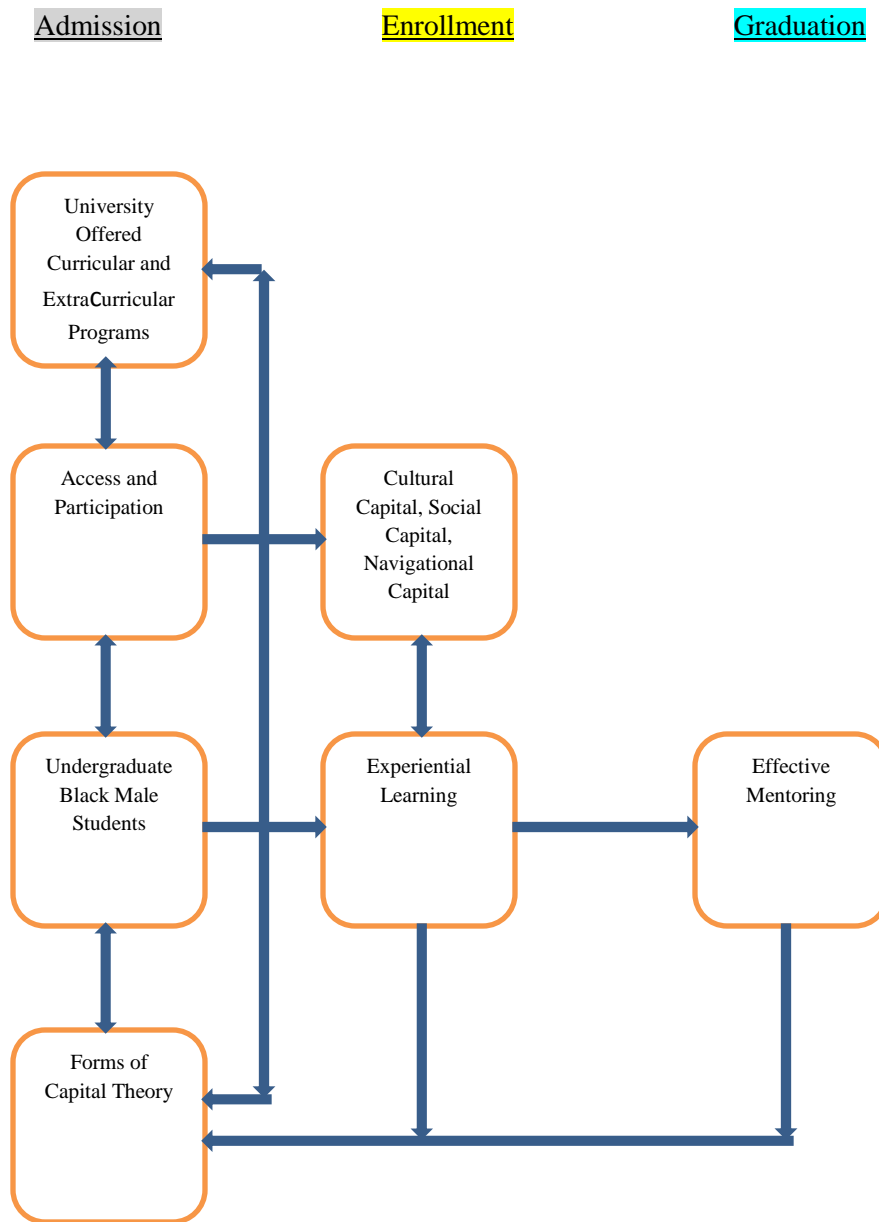


Figure 6.1 Mentoring Best Practices Model

Admission

University Offered Curricular and Extracurricular Programs.

Curricular programs refer to the learning that takes place in a formal education environment—this usually starts in the classroom. Jacobi (1991) stresses the need for undergraduate academic success and suggests mentoring as a tool to help accomplish this task. On the other hand, the mentor should focus on the academic and personal growth of the student. Institutions can help increase the potential for academic success of this group of students by hiring more faculty members of color (Lee, 1999; Choy, 2001). Black males pursue higher education at a lower rate than their White counterparts (Cuyjet, 2006; Harper, 2009). These educational opportunities should provide a solid foundation and equip the student with the skills and knowledge necessary to obtain a career and provide a living for themselves. Institutions should take the steps necessary to maximize the students' opportunities to ensure their success once they are admitted.

As we know, extracurricular programs fall outside the traditional academically-based programs offered by the institution. These activities are usually voluntary, social, or philanthropic as opposed to scholastic; however, they are often guided by a faculty mentor or staff who serves as advisor. Extracurricular programs provide a great opportunity for students to get involved and acclimated to their institution (Astin, 1984) and help students apply the information learned in the classroom to become better-rounded individuals. Students who are involved in activities outside of the classroom are more likely to get acclimated to the university earlier and do better academically (Tinto, 1987).

Access and Participation.

This next piece of the model consists of two very important yet different pieces. It is important that the students have access to mentoring programs and experiences. There needs to be an opportunity for the students to engage in various types of mentoring as well. There should be well-trained faculty and staff members who take an interest in this group of students and who want to help them be successful (Palmer, Davis, & Hilton, 2009). The faculty and staff should make themselves available and meet the students where they are to build strong relationships with them. The students should have the opportunity to have formal and informal mentoring relationships with a diverse group of faculty and staff (Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey, 2005). This will allow them to choose the right mentor for them and provide them the option of choosing a mentor who looks like them if they so choose. There should also be students who can relate to and identify similarly with these students to provide an impactful peer mentoring opportunity.

It is also important for the students to actively participate in these opportunities. The students have to take responsibility for their experiences and put themselves in the best position to be successful. When opportunities to join organizations, work with professors on research, or attend an extracurricular activity with peers present it is important that the students take advantage of them (Astin, 1984). The student should actively pursue opportunities and be proactive in creating them if the experiences that they are looking for do not seem to be readily available.

Undergraduate Black Male Students.

It is important to highlight that the student is at the core of the suggested mentoring best practices model. It is designed to help this particular group of students to be successful academically and to participate and receive a well-rounded education facilitated through effective mentoring experiences. This mentoring should include both traditional one-on-one mentoring with faculty and staff as well as peer mentoring (Henriksen, 1995, Galbraith, 2003). The goal is to provide support for the student at multiple levels and cover areas that can range from dealing with past issues, adjusting to and getting involved in their new campus environment and preparing for their future after graduation. Keeping the student as the focal point in the model aims to develop the whole student and to level the playing field at universities and colleges where the campus culture was not created with this group of students in mind (Lee, 1999). The students' background and upbringing are very important elements; each student brings with him several forms of capital (e.g., familial capital, aspirational capital, residence capital as described by Yosso, 2005). Familial capital is impacted by the community the student grew up in, the peers he interacted with and befriended, and of course the family environment where he grew up. This information contributes to the student's makeup and should not be overlooked as the student continues to grow and develop as a person and as a professional.

Forms of Capital Theory.

As the students begin to adjust to life on campus they are presented with the opportunity to observe their surroundings and learn about college life. At this early stage they should be introduced to various forms of capital (e.g., social capital, navigational

capital, and cultural capital, as described by Bourdieu, 1986) to help students do the transition from their communities and cultures to the new place and the mainstream culture and community. The institution should design mentoring programs and recruit mentors that are able to foster different forms of capital as to provide the Black male students with the core competencies that their White counterparts already possess. Participating in these programs the students will see peers who are popular on campus and who have extensive social networks. They will see how well connected those students are and the type of impact it has on their collegiate experience (Coleman, 1988). As a result, the students will also begin to develop social networks of their own consisting of peers, faculty, and staff members. This practice may encourage students to be academically successful and identify tips (e.g., study skills, campus resources for academic growth, faculty support) and other ways to ensure that they do their best to remain in school and ultimately graduate. All in all, participating in university sponsored mentoring programs should provide a foundation and introduction to experiences that fosters students development of different forms of capital.

Enrollment

Forms of Capital: Cultural, Social, and Navigational.

The mentoring experiences provided by the institution should provide the students with access to forms of capital that will help them be successful throughout the college experience and beyond. Even though there are many forms of capital, study findings suggest the importance of fostering and developing cultural, social, and navigational capitals when working with this specific student population.

The students gain **cultural capital** in the form of educational qualifications by strengthening their resume and getting involved with faculty and staff members who can provide information about prestigious honor societies and other academic based initiatives for the students to get involved with (Bourdieu, 1984). The student also increases their embodied form of cultural capital by having experiences that enrich their lives and thus their stories in the long run.

The students gain **social capital** through their involvement with peers or faculty/staff members. The connections that the students make are very important to helping them get acclimated to the campus environment. It can also be helpful as the students prepare for the next step in their lives after they leave the institution. The students can strengthen their social capital by getting connected with the right people (Coleman, 1998). In the findings the participants spoke of the important role that peer mentoring played for them. This is a very rich source of social capital. Student organizations are a perfect place to meet peers and great networks for social capital, especially fraternities due to the alumni ties that they provide. Faculty and staff will serve as references for the students and they can open doors that may not have been opened otherwise and the student benefit from that social capital.

Navigational capital should help the students to navigate through the institution (Yosso, 2005). There are a lot of behind the scenes things that happen on a college campus. This capital helps provide student with insight that prepares them for those exact things. It is hard to know what you are supposed to do or expect if you have never been in a situation before. This is extremely helpful to student from a first generation background that cannot rely on family members to provide basic insight about college

and the ins and outs of the experience. These insights can range from things as complex as filling out the FAFSA to something as simple as understanding the amount of credit hours to take per semester. This knowledge is invaluable to the students.

The proposed model consists of best practices that can help undergraduate Black males be successful. These are a few practical ideas that can be implemented across the board; if institutions evaluate and take account of their resources, it is possible that they already have the necessary resources to implement these ideas.

Experiential Learning.

The students should actively participate in mentoring programs and relationships as protégés. They should be able to discuss, ponder, and reflect on the mentoring experience for actual learning to happen. The mentoring programs should make room for this critical reflection to take place so that students can make sense of the experience. The mentoring programs should help the students to learn about the rules and expectations of the institutions and the campus culture. The students in turn should draw on their learning and give advice to peers; they should participate as peer mentors allowing for active experimentation. This practice will enhance their experience in a holistic manner for them to grow personally, academically, and professionally.

It is crucial for the student to review and reflect on the learning experiences that they had as a result of participating in mentoring relationships. Experiential learning is a cyclical process; therefore, the students will be able to go through the learning cycle as many times as possible (Kolb, 1984).

Graduation

Effective Mentoring.

As explained at the beginning of this section, the suggested mentoring best practices model is designed with the three main stages of admission, enrollment, and graduation in mind; thus effective mentoring is the product of the interaction of all the elements already described. Effective mentoring appears in the last stage because the ultimate goal of effective mentoring is to successfully graduate the student.

Effective mentoring should provide opportunities for the mentee to grow and develop by being in relationships that are beneficial and satisfying for both mentor and protégé; in this relationship the students should also be able to identify himself with the mentor in terms of gender and race (Reason, 2009). According to the study findings, the role of the mentor is to challenge the student to realize their potential and holds him accountable. The relationship should be flexible enough to evolve and cater to the needs of the mentee. The best practices model aims to accomplish the final stage in the university life of an individual seeking a degree and should contribute to the successful retention and graduation of Black male undergraduate students.

In summary, once the students are admitted to the institution, they start taking classes, and should also get involved in extracurricular activities. The institution should ensure that there are various, meaningful programs in place to support this group of students (Choy, 2001; Cuyjet, 2006). The faculty and staff should be encouraged to participate and take a personal interest in helping these students succeed. However, once informed about his possibilities to participate, it is up to the student to seek out access to

these opportunities and make sure that they participate actively. By taking advantage of these opportunities the students should be able to acquire and develop different forms of capital. They will meet friends and mentors who will broaden their social networks.

These new resources can serve as information sources about their culture, about how to navigate through the university successfully and an array of other personal and professional related topics. As the student continues to matriculate and graduate, he will be equipped with the necessary tools to have a successful professional life and career.

Their mentoring relationships can give them a safe place to reflect, conceptualize, evaluate, and learn to help them grow. Effective mentoring is a tool that will help the student get to this point but it does not stop here. The mentor should still be a resource as the student develops his resume, applies for jobs, and starts his career. Ideally the student will 'pay it forward' and begin mentoring another young Black male making use of the knowledge he acquired through his previous mentoring experience; this is truly effective mentoring!

Tensions and Challenges

There were challenges that I encountered while conducting this research. The first was my existing relationships with the participants. I knew each of the research participants personally and the relationships I had with them varied. I knew the majority of them very well and had worked with them in student organizations that I have advised. While I did not know the other participants on the same level, I knew who they were and I had spoken with them before, either in passing or at other university events. In conducting this research, There were both pros and cons to these existing relationships. It helped that the students were comfortable with me and they participated openly and

freely. They knew of my involvement with the topic on campus and this made it easier for them to accept that the information they provided would be used to help them or the groups of students who will attend the institution after they depart. The challenge for me began when I started to analyze the data. I noticed that I was adding information that was not provided in the study but that I privileged to through my relationships with the participants and by working at the institution that they attend. Students would tell me their plans, goals, and struggles during the data collection process. I was able to see these situations play out and identify if the students were successful at what they planned to accomplish, change, and things of that nature. As a result I began to put some of these results in with their data. My chair was very helpful with keeping me on task and focused about ensuring that all of the data used was gained through the research process. Revisiting the original transcriptions of the student's interviews was a helpful solution to this problem as well.

This study has undergone numerous changes; it was originally designed to be a quantitative study that took place at multiple institution types based on the diversity of the student enrollment. In the process of changing it to a qualitative research study some components were taken out in order to place the focus on the stories and journeys of the participants. This was very difficult at first because I wanted to make sure that the research was impactful and could be used to make changes that were beneficial to undergraduate Black male students. There were times early in the process where I wondered if I made the right decision by sticking with this study in its current format. That question was quickly answered when I began conducting the interviews and listening to the rich stories of the participants. As mentioned earlier I had prior

relationships with these students however I was blown away by the depth of information that I learned about them. Conducting this research also caused me to reflect on my experiences as a minority student who attended predominately White institutions as well. Deciding to make this a qualitative study was a great decision and one that I believe will provide insight that can help students succeed.

Implications for Practice

This study was implemented in order to fill an identified gap in the literature on mentoring undergraduate Black male students and also to explore the impact of mentoring relationships on access to forms of capital for these students. A large portion of the existing literature on Black males addresses negative issues facing this group (Harvey and Anderson, 2005; Holzman, 2004; Cuyjet, 2006). This research was conducted in an environment that has been successful at retaining and graduating Black undergraduate males at a level higher than that of their white counterparts. It provides many positives that oppose the negative stereotypes we so often see and hear.

The proposed best practices model is practical and consists of components that are readily available at basically every institution of higher education. The model serves as a way to assess the mentoring programs that are being offered and gauge ways to increase the access and participation of the mentoring that is taking place in regards to both the students and the faculty and staff participants. This model can be used as it is to provide assistance in developing specific mentoring programs or it can serve as an example as institutions create their own model and slate of programs that work to fit the needs of their students.

Involvement was a very important factor that kept surfacing repeatedly. The students felt that being involved in student organizations or working on campus as a student employee helped with the transition to the university and provided access to mentors. Participation in these groups provides a sense of belonging to the university and the Black community in the cases where the student is participating in an organization that caters to that population. The participants noted that the student leaders in these organizations were usually upperclassmen who were doing well and who served as peer mentors or role models for them. Each registered student organization is required to have a faculty or staff member serve as an advisor. The Coalition of Black Faculty and Staff, which is an organization which was started to support and empower the professional as well as the Black students, makes sure that each of the student organizations which cater to the Black students has an advisor of merit. These advisors spend lots of time working with these students and usually become mentors to members in the organization, especially the executive board members. Involvement can be increased and made better at this institution by providing more opportunities for students to get involved earlier. This was a common reoccurrence by the participants. They would have liked to get involved early during their freshmen year and feel these opportunities should be offered to the new incoming undergraduate Black males.

Student involvement is a very important requirement for mentoring to work and even though it is not a new discovery, it is of the outmost importance. The premise of student involvement theory (Astin, 1984) is often shared as the more involved a student is with the institution the more successful they will be. The theory has five postulates that it is based on. They range from issues focusing on the investment of energy to increasing

student involvement. This theory suggests a major shift be made in the way faculty and administrators look at the education process.

According to Astin (1999) “the theory of student involvement encourages educators to focus less on what they do and more on what the student does: how motivated the student is and how much time and energy the student devotes to the learning process” (p. 522). Cress and colleagues (2001) allude to the fact that research indicates that students involved in leadership roles or activities have higher levels of educational attainment and stronger personal values.

The benefits of student involvement can be seen outside of the classroom as well. Research regularly shows that students who live on campus in residence halls do better academically and complete their degree requirements at a higher rate than their counterparts who do not (Astin, 2005). The findings by Eklund-Leen and Young (1997) in their research confirm the theory of involvement. They found that the more involved the student, the greater the benefits. The strong identification with and attachment to undergraduate life should not be underestimated.

The relevance of the student involvement theory have been seen across racial lines as well. Berger and Milem (1999) note that involvement has shown to be particularly beneficial to underrepresented groups. Davis (1991) found in his research that higher levels of interaction with peers and faculty, along with an increased involvement in organized activities leads to lower African American dropout rates.

Taylor and Howard-Hamilton’s (1995) research shows that African American students on predominately white campuses who are more involved with clubs, academic experiences, sports, faculty, staff, campus employment, community service are more

likely to develop positive racial identities. Astin (1999) states that Black students are more likely to persist at Black colleges than at White colleges. This group of students is doing pretty well at an HSI. The findings of this study are consistent with the views of these other researchers.

The students are valuable resources for the mentoring and programs that take place at institutions of higher education institutions and they should serve as the guides for the organizations that provide the mentoring. The students should be surveyed and the programs should be tailored to fit their needs through the assessment. Multiple options should be provided to accommodate the differing needs that the students have. The existing literature should be used as a guide as the programs are developed and implemented. As changes and adjustments are made to suit their particular students this information should be shared with others to continue adding to the existing body of literature.

The sustainability of the programs at the institutions depends on the students and the administrators that facilitate and advise them. Without the students, there can be no programs, so their buy-in is vital. Once the students embrace the programs they end up serving as ambassadors for them and recruit other students, particularly underclassmen to participate. This can create a pipeline of students who want to continue the legacy of the program that hopefully has been very important to their growth and development. The administrators are charged with the task of holding the students accountable and ensuring that the programs remain impactful and continue to serve an important role in the lives of the students who participate.

Ideas for Future Research

While this study was conducted at an institution that is classified as a HSI, it does not provide much information about how this experience impacts the participants. Future research that does so would be very impactful. As the Hispanic population in this country increases the number of HSI will increase drastically in certain areas of the country. The participants in this study were all upperclassmen. Doing a similar research project but including a mix of underclassmen, upperclassmen, and faculty and staff members would allow the experiences to be viewed from different perspectives. Having the research focus more inclusively on men of color as opposed to solely Black males would allow for comparison and contrast between the various groups included (e.g. Hispanic males, Asian-American males). Conducting the research at a different institution would provide more insight. An HBCU that graduates and retains Black men at successful rates would allow for comparisons and an opportunity to compile best practices from each institution.

Final Thoughts

I have worked in the field of student affairs in some capacity for the past 13 years. I started as a student employee during my undergrad years, which was followed by two years as a graduate assistant, and I have spent the past 8 years working professionally in the field. During my career I have had a front row seat to watch and assist students as they attempt to matriculate through the university. Every year a cohort of bright eyed and bushy tailed freshmen arrive at our campuses. Some of them are able to transition, adapt, and be successful. There is another segment of this population that struggles and ultimately ends up leaving the institution for various reasons. The numbers become more

intriguing to me when you look at the Black community and particularly men. The numbers are usually the lowest of any group in regards to retention and graduation rates. This is troubling in general but especially to me as a Black man who also happens to serve in a mentorship role for undergraduate Black men.

It makes me think back to my experience as an undergraduate student. I try to determine what helped me to be successful and I immediately think of the role that mentoring played. I entered a predominately white institution in a very rural part of the state as a first generation college student with no idea about what to expect from college. Truthfully, I decided to attend college because I wanted to continue running track, had no desire to turn my part time fast food job into a full time occupation, and no one else in my family had given it a shot so why not give it the old college try. Had it not been for the peer mentor relationships I formed with teammates on the track team, my resident assistant, hall floor mates, and fraternity brothers, I know I would not be the person that I am today. I learned valuable lessons which ranged from adjusting academically to the collegiate experience to learning how to survive socially in an environment where I was a minority both ethnically and culturally.

The most valuable of the mentoring relationships were those that I formed with members of the faculty and staff. They were able to provide insight on how to navigate the systems of the university and how to not only maintain the status quo, but to excel in the environment. They were able to provide valuable firsthand experience from their own encounters as well as from other students they have mentored over the years. I was inspired to pursue higher education (Masters and eventually Doctorate) by a professor who took an interest in my work while I was taking his course for an elective. He and I

did some follow up work together and he continued to encourage me to further my education and still today he continues to be a valuable resource as he wrote one of my recommendation letters for acceptance into the PhD program.

I know how important mentoring was and continues to be for me and my progression as a student. I feel that it is just as important to this current group of students. This research provided me the opportunity to see that first hand.

APPENDIX A

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of consistency and clarity, this section of the chapter provides description for important terms that are used in the document. Some of these terms appear frequently in the literature yet the definitions associated with them vary.

Mentoring: “a multidimensional, dynamic, reciprocal relationship between a more advanced practitioner and a novice” (Girves, et al 2005, p. 453). Mentoring is predicated on communication.

Mentor: Zey (1997) states that “a mentor is a person who oversees the career and development of another person, usually a junior, through teaching, counseling, providing psychological support, protecting, and at times promoting or sponsoring” (p.7)

Mentee: Is recipient of instruction, guidance, and counseling from a senior person for development towards their educational or career path. This person is also referred to as a protégé in some circles (Zey, 1997)

Retention: Is the process of retaining a student from year to year as they matriculate through to the senior year at a four year institution. It is sometimes referred to as persistence depending on the specific institution (Tinto, 1987).

Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI): Refers to an institution that must satisfy the following criteria; cannot be a for-profit University, must offer at least two-year academic programs that lead to a degree, must be accredited by an agency or association

recognized by the Department of Education, must have high enrollment of needy students, and have at least a 25% Hispanic undergraduate full-time-equivalent student enrollment (Laden, 2001).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU): These are institutions of higher education in the United States that were established before 1964 with the intention of serving the black community (Allen, 1992).

Predominately White Institution (PWI): Is an institution of higher education where white students make up the majority of the undergraduate population. This institution type makes up the vast majority (Allen, 1992)

Navigational capital: Refers to skills used to navigate and maneuver through social institutions. “Historically, this infers the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with communities of color in mind” (Yosso, 2005).

Social capital: Is a sociological concept. A set of institutionalized relationships and the benefits that are obtained by individuals based on their membership in such social circles and networks (Bourdieu, 2001).

Cultural capital: A symbolic property or good that families and communities transmit to their offspring (Bourdieu, 1977). Cultural capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status.

Human capital: An accumulation of knowledge, attributes, and competencies gained through education and experience which enables individuals or groups of people to perform labor to produce economic value (Bourdieu, 1986).

African American: Citizen or resident of the United States who has origins in any of the black populations of Africa. According to the U.S Census Bureau (2010) most African Americans are the direct descendants of captive Africans who survived the slavery era. This term is used interchangeably with Black by some and will be used in this research only when quoting the work of others.

Black: This term is used in systems of racial classification for humans of a dark skinned phenotype, relative to other racial groups. Different societies apply different criteria regarding who is classified as "black", and often social variables such as class, socio-economic status also plays a role in that classification (McPherson and Shelby 2004). This term will be used when discussing the research participants.

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is mentoring for you?
2. Please provide some examples of what good mentoring looks like.
3. What do you remember about your first mentor?
4. How do you describe mentoring relationships at the college level?
5. What role does mentoring play in your collegiate experience?
6. How have mentoring relationships impacted your understanding of culture of the people around you on campus and the local community?
7. How has mentoring impacted, if in any way, your social networks?
8. How have mentoring relationships impacted the way you access services and playing your role as a successful student?
9. What has your educational experience of attending an HSI been like?
10. What are some of the reasons motivating you to serve as a mentor?
11. What does the mentoring you have received from a faculty or staff member look like?
12. What does mentoring you have received from a peer look like?
13. What is the perception you think others have of you due to your participation in the mentoring program?

14. What do you think we can do in order to attract more mentors for students at this institution?
15. If someone were to ask you about your mentoring experience and if they should participate, what three things would you tell them and why?

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

WARMING UP TO THE TOPIC

1. What is mentoring?
2. What does an ideal mentoring relationship look like?
or What does successful mentoring look like?
3. What questions do you have about mentoring?

STARTING TO GET SPECIFIC

4. What advice would you give a Black male entering Texas State for the first time in relation to mentoring?
5. How do the mentoring needs of undergraduate Black men differ from other groups?
6. What are the advantages or benefits of having a mentor?
7. What can each one of us do to make mentoring at Texas State better?
8. What role if any do you see gender, culture, and ethnicity playing in the process of pairing up mentors and mentees? (need to follow up on gender, culture, ethnicity)
9. How should mentors and mentees be selected for pairing?

STARTING TO WRAP IT UP

10. What are some recruiting strategies you can suggest to make sure there are enough mentors for the students at this institution?
11. By definition you are a group of successful Black male students. You are enrolled and keep enrolled at Texas State, you have survived your freshman year, etc (explain successful). Then the question is...
What elements or what reasons do you think have contributed to you being successful at this institution?

CONCLUDING

What would you like to share that I have not asked?

What questions do you have now that we have had this conversation?

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Texas State University at San Marcos

IRB # EXP2012X1020

This is an invitation to participate in a research study. The principal researcher, Anthony White, will also describe the study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below. Ask questions of anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Title of Research Study:

Mentoring Experiences of Undergraduate Black Males: Access to
Navigational, Social, and Cultural Capital

Researcher:

Mr. Anthony White, Doctoral student
Adult, Professional, and Community Education program
Texas State University-San Marcos
Telephone number: 704-806-2890

Supervising Professor:

Dr. Clarena Larrotta, Assistant Professor
Educational Administration & Psychological Services
Texas State University-San Marcos
Telephone number: 512-245-6288

Purpose of the study:

The purpose of this research study is to document and provide voice to the stories of undergraduate Black men in reference to their mentoring experiences. Eight to twelve participants are expected.

What I expect from you

- Participate in an hour long individual interview (will be audio recorded)

- Participate in a half hour follow up/clarification interview (if needed)
- Participate in a two hour long group interview (will be video recorded)
- Provide a minimum of three electronic journal entries
- Identify an artifact (clothing, photo, etc...) which symbolizes mentoring for you (This will be brought to the individual and group interviews)

If you agree to participate in the research study, you are agreeing to let me use examples of your oral, written, and video recorded participation, your journal entries, interview responses, and your evaluations of the experience as information for my research.

Possible Discomforts and Risks

There is very little risk in participating in this study. It could happen that a participant becomes emotional or has recollections of bad memories related to mentoring, in which case the participant will be referred to the Counseling Center and I will help him make an appointment and follow up in case extra support is needed. There will be no deception involved on the part of the researcher. Participation is voluntary and participants will be able to withdraw at any point of the research study.

Possible Benefits

For You as a Participant: You will gain knowledge of and develop a better understanding for the concept of mentoring. The participants will be involved in dialogue with fellow students which could potentially lead to an enriched college experience and new or improved friendships. The participants will also have a hand in assessing the mentoring programs on campus and helping to potentially improve them not only for themselves but other students as well.

For the Field of Education: Results The findings from this study will be of benefit to higher education institutions. Study findings will add to the body of knowledge on mentoring experiences of Black male students. The study will document what this institution is doing right and highlight the experiences of the enrolled undergraduate Black males participating in the study. We can learn from their experiences, transfer/reproduce/enhance these efforts in subsequent initiatives.

If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?

No, participation is totally free.

Will you receive compensation for your participation in this study?

No, there is not any monetary reward for participating in this study.

What if you do not want to participate?

Participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate in the study and your refusal will not influence your relationships with Texas State University or the researcher.

How can you withdraw from the project?

You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this project at any time.

How will the information collected through the study be protected?

Your identity will never be disclosed. Your real name will never be attached to any of your actual words from written documents, your oral participation, or the interviews. Your identity will not be revealed in any published form. Any audio taped or videotaped information will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. All data informing this study will be kept in a secure place (e.g., a locked file cabinet in the investigator's office). These tapes will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and his research associates.

Signatures

As the principal researcher in this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks involved in participating in this research study.

Anthony White,
Principal Researcher

Date

You have been informed about the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks involved in participating in this research study. You have received a copy of this form. You have had the opportunity to ask questions before signing this form and you understand that you can ask other questions at any time. You also know that you can withdraw your consent and stop participation in this project at any time. Finally, you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed name of participant

Date

Signature of participant

Date

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