


Summer 8-2017

Community College Completion: A Qualitative Study of African American Community College Mentors and Past African American Male Participants in an Academic Mentoring Initiative

Pamela M. Nichols

Follow this and additional works at: <https://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd>

 Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), [Educational Sociology Commons](#), and the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Nichols, Pamela M., "Community College Completion: A Qualitative Study of African American Community College Mentors and Past African American Male Participants in an Academic Mentoring Initiative" (2017). *Theses and Dissertations (All)*. 1516.
<https://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd/1516>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Knowledge Repository @ IUP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations (All) by an authorized administrator of Knowledge Repository @ IUP. For more information, please contact cclouser@iup.edu, sara.parme@iup.edu.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMPLETION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE MENTORS AND PAST AFRICAN AMERICAN
MALE PARTICIPANTS IN AN ACADEMIC MENTORING INITIATIVE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Pamela M. Nichols

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

August 2017

© 2017 Pamela M. Nichols

All Rights Reserved

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Professional Studies in Education

We hereby approve this dissertation of

Pamela M. Nichols

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

Valeri R. Helterbran, Ed.D.
Professor of Professional Studies in Education,
Retired, Advisor

Kelli Jo Kerry-Moran, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Professional Studies in
Education

Kelli Paquette, Ed.D.
Professor of Professional Studies in Education

ACCEPTED

Randy L. Martin, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title Community College Completion: A Qualitative Study of African American Community College Mentors and Past African American Male Participants in an Academic Mentoring Initiative

Author: Pamela M. Nichols

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Valeri R. Helterbran

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Kelli Jo Kerry-Moran
Dr. Kelli Paquette

Program administrators of academic mentoring programs for African American male community college students contend that mentoring provides a means to increase retention and improve completion rates. Through the evaluation of prior studies, this study will seek to identify the factors that lead to successful completion.

Shandley's (1989) concept of mentoring in higher education processes, Astin's (1993) theory of involvement and Tinto's (1993) academic and social integration theoretical approach provide the frameworks for this study.

Shandley (1989) contended that intentional interaction between two or more individuals creates a nurturing relationship that fosters the growth and development of a protégé. He further contends that this process is insightful, supportive, and often protective. Astin's (1993) theory of involvement was used to understand the correlation between student involvement in activities and academic success. Tinto's (1993) academic and social integration theoretical model provided the framework that suggested that a student's attitude reflects positively when a favorable environment exists to circumvent a student's feelings of isolation and alienation.

Three current mentors and six past participants were interviewed for this study. This study expanded upon mentoring literature by using existing theories as a framework for analysis. An evaluation of how mentoring relationships increases the probability of achieving graduation

will enable community colleges, four- year colleges and universities an opportunity to assess their programs.

DEDICATION

To my mom resting in heaven. You always told me that I could accomplish anything that I set my mind towards. You are still my best friend and confidant. To Bria and Brandi, you are my lifeline. I hope that I have been half the mom that gram was. Strive for the best and nothing less. I know that one day you both will achieve all that you have prayed for. Remember to keep God first.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The trajectory I experienced in the pursuit of my degree(s) has not been easy. I was one of those students in the 1980s who fell to the wayside despite the hopes of university administrators and myself. I was an aspiring student with plans to earn my doctorate before my 30th birthday. No matter what I did, I kept getting financially derailed. This journey has been arduous, but this dissertation is evidence that I refused to give up.

For as long as I can remember, my mom, known affectionately as ‘Sweet Face,’ told me that I could do whatever I set my mind to do. I recall the day that I told her that I was starting my doctorate. She was overjoyed with excitement. I am saddened by the fact that she passed away before I finished, but I know that she has been sitting by side prodding me to work through the heaviness and heartache of missing her. I did it, Sweet Face! This is for you. This is for us. This is my gratitude to you for imparting the reality that I am able to accomplish whatever I set my sight on. You always told us that whatever God has for you will be yours no matter what. I don’t think that it is a coincidence that graduation day occurred over Mother’s Day weekend. I will never forget holding your hand as I walked you to my car to what would be your last earthly Mother’s Day breakfast. Happy Heavenly Mother’s Day Sweet Face!

To my daughters, Bria and Brandi Nichols-Bey, you both have truly been examples before me. You are beautiful, kind and intelligent. You are my lifeline. You force me to reach higher and higher. To my siblings – Harold ‘Buddy’ Nichols, you have always been my hero. You were the first of us to graduate college. I recall proudly telling my second grade teacher that my big brother was in college. My brother, John ‘Dickie’ Nichols, you are the reason that I earned my undergraduate degree in psychology. I had to learn what was plaguing you mentally. The border between genius and mental illness is perplexing. My brother, Theodore ‘Jerry’ Nichols, words can’t express how grateful I am to you for dropping out of college to help Sweet

Face raise her three ‘babies’ after our parents divorced. Thank you for the sacrifices that you made to ensure that we had food in the fridge and a warm home. I was grateful that you were able to finally earn your degree. My one and only sister, Cynthia Nichols Rickman, although I am only one year and two months older than you, you have always been wiser and stronger. Words can’t express my gratitude to you for all that you have done and continue to do to ensure that I am okay. The loving, kindness and encouragement that you offered before, during and after my divorce is what got me through. You are kind, beautiful, funny and gallant. Brian ‘Spidey’ Nichols, you by far are the most talented and intelligent one of the entire Nichols brood. You have truly been blessed by the Divine. You are simply amazing. My brothers and sister, we defied the odds. The fact that we all went to college and five of the six of us graduated definitely deviated from the norm. To my father, John R. Nichols, I kept on trucking after you passed away.

Upon meeting my chair, Dr. Valeri Helterbran, I knew that you would surely and expertly guide my steps academically. The ease with which you delivered course content was like no other. Your wise and witty delivery of course content was never dictatorial or overly conciliatory. When you spoke, I listened and I learned. I have never heard a classmate describe you negatively. You were the first teacher to ever tell me that I was “one smart cookie.” Those words resonated within my soul and ignited the spark that illuminated the confidence and grit that I needed to endure and overcome the unforeseen obstacles that life continued to throw my way during my studies.

Dr. Kelli-Jo Kerry-Moran and Dr. Kelli Paquette, I appreciate the motivational words and guidance that you both extended during my studies. Dr. Moran, you helped me realize that I possessed the writing skills needed to successfully write a dissertation. Dr. Paquette, you

reinforced Dr. Moran's inspiration and encouraged me to develop my book prospectus after writing this dissertation. You are both well respected, extremely gifted and talented professors. I would not have come this far without you. Thank you all for helping me believe in myself.

Finally, words do not adequately express the gratitude that I owe my 'Angel' Martine Allegro for the patience and support that she provided me throughout the editing process. You are a jewel. I am a firm believer that God places people in our lives for a season and a reason. Peace and continued blessings for you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	Statement of the Problem.....	5
	Purpose of the Study	6
	Significance of Study.....	8
	Theoretical Framework.....	10
	Definition of Terms.....	12
	Limitations of Study	13
	Summary	13
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	15
	Black Male Students P-12.....	16
	White Female Teacher – Black Males	17
	Socialization: Understanding the African American Male	21
	Mentoring.....	23
	Similarities: Workplace Mentoring and Higher Education	26
	Community College Mentoring Models	28
	Institutional Action	29
	Institutional Commitment	31
	Institutional Agents and Social Capital.....	33
	President Obama’s Effect	34
	African American Male Self-Efficacy	37
	Black Male Community College Collegians	40
	Summary	44
3	METHODOLOGY	47
	Research Questions.....	48
	Research Site: Urban Community College (UCC)	49
	Data Collection	54
	Population	55
	Participant Interviews	55
	Expert Panel	57
	Interview Protocol.....	57
	Triangulation.....	59
	Data Analysis	60
	Reliability and Validation	61
	Summary	62

Chapter		Page
4	DATA AND ANALYSIS	63
	Participant Descriptions	64
	Demographic Analysis.....	65
	Emergent Themes	69
	Mentor Experiences of Grade School Racism	69
	Mentor Definition of Mentoring	71
	Mentor Responsibilities	74
	Mentor Training	76
	There is a Need for African American Male Mentor Initiatives.....	77
	Empowerment	79
	The Joy and Challenges of Being a Mentor	80
	Ideal Program Design	82
	Mentor Similarities in Upbringing.....	83
	Mentee Educational Goals	84
	Mentee Definition of Mentoring.....	85
	Program Recruitment	88
	Student Activities.....	91
	Networking	92
	Race Matters	96
	Mentee Benefits and Disadvantages of AAMS Participation.....	102
	UCC Support.....	103
	Graduation and the Success of Others	106
	Best and Challenges of the AAMS Mentoring Program	110
	Ideal Program.....	112
	Additional Thoughts	113
	Additional Emergent Themes	114
	Summary	114
5	DISCUSSION	116
	Mentor Perceptions of Mentoring.....	117
	Mentor Experiences of Grade School Racism, Degree Attainment, Reaching Back	118
	Mentors Perceptions of Mentoring	119
	Mentor Training and Responsibilities for AAMS	121
	The Joys and Challenges of Mentoring	122
	Mentee Perceptions of Mentor.....	124
	Mentee Socialization and Networking.....	124
	Academic Self Confidence	125
	Black Like Me.....	126
	Mentee Advantages of Program Participation	127
	Institutional Encouragement	127

Chapter	Page
Relationship to Concepts and Theoretical Foundations	128
Shandley’s Concept of Mentoring	128
Astin’s Theory of Involvement.....	129
Tinto’s Academic and Social Integration Theory	130
Conclusions.....	131
Implications.....	132
Prospective Program Design.....	133
Future Program Recommendations.....	135
Recommendations for Further Studies.....	136
Summary	138
REFERENCES	139
APPENDICES	155
Appendix A: Past MMI Participant Demographic Survey	155
Appendix B: Current MMI Mentors Semi-Structured Interview Questions.....	156
Appendix C: Past MMI Participants Semi-Structured Interview Questions.....	157
Appendix D: Interview Question Research Matrix: Mentors	158
Appendix E: Interview Question Research Matrix: Past Student Participants.....	159

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Urban Community College Students by Race and Gender.....	51

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Participants' age.....	66
2	Participants attended college/university attendance prior to enrollment at Urban Community College	66
3	Participants' current enrollment in a four year college or university	67
4	Participants' parental college attendance or graduation	68

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

EDUCATION is the medium by which a people are prepared for the creation of their own particular civilization, and the advancement and glory of their own race.
Marcus Garvey (Garvey, 2009, p. 7).

Access to education proves to be a powerful factor in determining an individual's success both in school and in later life. However, an effective and quality educational system continues to be out of reach for many populations, specifically young African American males. Consider, for example, "[i]n more than 16,000 school districts in the United States and since the 1980s, Black males in P-12 educational systems have been identified as being underachievers" (Bonner, 2014, p. 13). However, the underachiever label does not emerge without reason; even worse, its effects last well within their secondary and post-secondary academic journey. According to the research conducted by Bonner (2014), Black males begin with strong enthusiasm but as they start grade four or five their enthusiasm diminishes due to their awareness of the maltreatment that they receive from their peers and White teachers. Additionally, the treatment that young Black males experience does not improve as they age. This existing state of affairs correlates with "higher rates of suspension, expulsions, non-promotions, dropouts, special education placements, low rates of secondary graduation," attrition, college attendance, and college graduation (Garibaldi as cited in Bonner, 2014, p. 13).

Young black males must overcome the pitfalls created by these educational gaps. In order to tackle this issue, school professionals from many areas and disciplines "have employed numerous antidotes to improve African American men's pathways to and through post-secondary education" (Harper & Harris, 2012, p. 1). Several philanthropic organizations,

including the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, The United Negro College Fund, and the College Board, have arranged national caucuses to evaluate the issues facing these students (Harper & Harris, 2012). The result of these meetings has prompted culturally sensitive antidotal mentoring initiatives within P-12 schools, community colleges, and four-year institutions. The goal of these programs is to target their academic and social issues and help African American males avoid the hardships that obstruct a successful college experience.

Extensive research has been completed with a focus on Black male student success rates in higher education as “many students, including Black males, have concerning levels of success, or the lack thereof, in college” (Wood, 2012, p. 30). Findings imply that developing insightful educational social connections and implementing successful academic curricula provides constructive advantages for student success. Academic success demands multiple areas of growth that incorporate the development of cognizance, the expansion of mortality, the increase in aptitude, the bridging of transferable expertise, the exploration of race and gender identity, and most importantly, the guidance through the transition to college life and its demands (Harper, 2012).

For nearly a decade Shaun R. Harper, director of the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, has argued that those who are interested in Black male student success have much to learn from Black men who have been successful. He believes that the one-sided emphasis on failure and low performing Black male undergraduates should be equalized with insights from those who have earned a college degree (Harper, 2012). Moreover, analyzing the men that have been successful will allow educators to understand and foster elements that assist future young Black males in achieving their goals. Much research points to mentoring and building strong relationships as a vital principle for success.

In 2009, the University of Pennsylvania's Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education conducted a study that included 219 Black male undergraduates. Students developed meaningful mentor relationships with campus administrators and faculty outside the classroom, participated in enriching educational experiences, and were recognized for college achievement. All of these students were successful in college; they believed that they had a good start by attending college preparatory high schools, such as Urban Prep Academy, or by participating in college summer bridge programs. An example of such a program is the Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center for the African American Male, which was established in 2004 at the Ohio State University and operates as "one of several initiatives that help African American men succeed" academically prior to college enrollment (Feintuch, 2010, p.18). This program is designed to reduce anxiety and acclimate African American males to the Ohio State University environment and extend the resources that will better enable them to focus on being a successful college student. To accomplish this goal, the Todd Anthony Bell Center engages Black males prior to their first semester in college by inviting them to attend an early arrival program. Increasing retention rates among this population validates the need for mentoring programs given that prior to the introduction of the center, the retention rate was much lower at 80.7%. Comparing those rates to four years after its founding, "the retention rate reached 89.3 %, on par with that of [Ohio State University's] general population at 92.8 %" (Feintuch, 2010, p. 18). Thus, these actions give credence to mentoring programs as a source of guidance for young Black males.

Looking at another example, Morehouse College has produced many leaders by instituting mentoring programs. At this Historically Black College and University (HBCU), all of its members were expected to embody specific values and ideals, where they "were educated not

to assimilate the status quo but to challenge and compel it to change for the betterment of all” (Harper, 2012, p. 2). The institution asserts that all students must be held to high standards and values, and that each of them possesses the ability to do great things, within their chosen career and as individuals. Colleges such as Morehouse realized that mentoring is one important type of assistance that will help students persevere through graduation.

Community colleges that offer mentoring initiatives provide better service to men of color. Across the nation, “Black males have the highest dropout rate among every racial, ethnic, and gender subgroup” and this population is most likely to drop out after their first year or leave without completion after three years (Wood, 2012, p. 31). Therefore, the implementation of effective educational practices is key for all students and is essential for placing emphasis on the importance of campus diversity, cultural competence, and other strategies that reduce the threat of stereotyping (*Aspirations To Achievement: Men Of Color And Community Colleges*, 2014).

In fact, Astin (1984; 1993) found that students who become more involved in various aspects of college life tend to have better outcomes, both in the short and long terms. Astin acknowledged that the college environment presents students with opportunities for interaction and involvement in campus life, “[enabling]...students to not only overcome feelings of social and cultural isolation, but also to develop the resilience and determination necessary to persist and eventually graduate” (McClure, 2006 as cited in Warde, 2008, p. 61). According to Fischer (2007), his findings determined that other considerations such as positive student-teacher interactions as well as positive peer relationship increased the likelihood that at-risk students would finish college to completion. These same factors provide other added benefits to the students as well, which only elevate their importance within the institution.

Institutional commitment is a vital component of student success. Institutional commitment is more than just mission statements. It is the colleges' willingness to invest in resources that provide the support needed to enhance and increase student success for all students, especially the underrepresented African American male community college undergraduate. A number of researchers "contend that in order to retain minority students, the [college] campus must be responsive to this need and provide a warm, supportive, and nurturing environment (LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997, p. 43). Mentoring programs that target African American male college students may help increase enrollment and persistence towards graduation. Also, an environment that allows for students to build "supportive same-race peer [relationship]...from memberships in Black Greek organizations, Black student clubs," or through mentoring relationships imparts "[feelings] of racial solidarity and support" (Harper, 2006 as cited in Warde, 2008, p. 61). Students are more likely to succeed in settings that hold high expectations and provide academic and social support. The key concept is that the educational institutions establish educational communities that involve students as equal members (Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

When asked for commentary pertaining to the issues surrounding the percentage of African American males in the United States who have successful enrollment and graduation experiences, Arthur Levine, the Teachers College president for Columbia University, expressed sadness that in "the world's wealthiest country[,] where an increasing number of students pursue postsecondary education and educational attainment has increased[,]...[the greatest] shame [allows] African American males [to] cluster at the bottom of almost every academic performance indicator" (Ellis, 2004, p. 1). In spite of the momentum gained by civil rights

action, evolving education systems into supportive environments and equal opportunities for everyone develops gradually. Yet, African American males have failed to make educational progress, and “there are still major obstacles that are preventing African American men from pursuing higher levels of education” (Anderson, 2006, p. 41). Most importantly, academic support systems must work to improve the completion rates of students who are most at risk of failing, particularly African American males. In order to achieve such levels of support, the system must make efforts to understand the motivations and backgrounds of this population, and to identify factors that influence their academic success.

The fear of stereotypes, academic unpreparedness, prior socialization and perceptions of racism in the labor force impede the progress of African American men, bringing an end to many students’ educations. Regrettably, these barriers for young Black men can begin before they enroll in college, even if African American males want to be successful in their post-secondary pursuits. Moreover, the college environment suffers from the lack of academic, cultural, and community contributions from this population of potential students. Asserting that notion further, “[t]he National Council on Education and the National Urban League both maintain that involving African American males in the higher education system is critical to reversing economic trends in African American society” (Polite & Davis, 1999 as cited in Ellis, 2004, p. 3).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of current African American community college mentors and past participants in an African American male community college mentoring initiative related to the completion of academic programs.

The California Postsecondary Education Commission 2006 Report stated that Black males attend community colleges in greater numbers than Black females (as cited in Cook, Bush, & Bush, 2008). Black students make up about 12 % of the community college population. Typically, the first step for African American students in their post-secondary academic journey includes community colleges. Supporting this idea, Harper (2006) points out that “[b]etween 1977 and 2003, Black male degree attainment increased by an average of 0.2 % points...[where] the most significant gains were at the associates degree level” (p.vii).

For this population of students, the college environment presents Black males with opportunities that they might not experience elsewhere. Often times, the knowledge that Black male students gain in a “two-year college...represents [their] first experience with post-secondary education, and for many, their last opportunity for obtaining a degree beyond a high school diploma” (Bush & Bush, 2005, p. 44). Such a statement, combined with the low rate of college completion, places community colleges, paradoxically, as the first and last stop for Black males’ education. The community college system, therefore, is uniquely situated to support Black males achieve their educational goals through mentoring initiatives.

For success to occur for both students and the community colleges, a better understanding of the experiences that inspire African American male degree achievement will contribute to on-going, race-specific mentoring initiatives. Reviewing research from Hagedorn et al. (2001) provides consistent data “collected across three cohorts of 202 African American men enrolled over the course of three consecutive semesters... [and] identified six background factors that predicted retention for African American men in community colleges...[including] age, high school grade point average, certainty about one’s major and...placing a high degree of importance on completing college” (Harris III & Wood, 2013, p. 176).

Longstanding models of retention and persistence have been useful in providing a foundation to develop the interaction factors that influence retention and college success of African American males. Completion initiatives appear to be a positive approach for student engagement, retention, and graduation.

Significance of Study

This study is significant because it contributes to the body of knowledge on the topic of mentoring. The goal of this study was to examine the experiences that promoted academic success for mentors and past participants of a community college mentoring initiative for African American males. Findings may possibly provide insight for similar program seeking avenues to better support African American men during their college years.

Understanding the motivational factors that shape the experiences of African American males will assist community college mentoring initiatives. As previously mentioned, community colleges provide the first college experience in post-secondary education for many, and for some, it is the last opportunity to earn a credential beyond a high school diploma. Furthermore, Wood and Palmer (2014) found that this population of students earn “the lowest grade point average (GPA) among all male students in public [two] year colleges” in which their mean average was 2.55 when compared with mean averages of the GPA earned by White (2.85), Asian (2.82), Hispanic/Latino (2.63), and Native American (2.65) students (p. 141). Bush and Bush (2005) discovered a lack of participation in extracurricular activities such as sports or clubs occurs more frequently among Black male students. Their findings also concluded that meeting with an instructor happens infrequently among this population of students. Given the large numbers of Black men in two year schools, community colleges with supportive mentoring programs may indeed be the best educational body to address this academic plight.

An incessant disparity has disconnected African American male community college students from other student groups. Research in the area of African American male college degree attainment has changed focus to understanding the social skills and academic preparedness that contribute to degree achievement. The value of this study relates to academic success initiatives and the ingenuity and support necessary to impart indispensable and crucial self-motivation required to achieve community college completion. The Center for Community College Student Engagement launched a special initiative, Improving Outcomes for Men of Color in Community Colleges. Their belief is that being of better service to men of color is the only way that community colleges can effectively realize their vision of retention and completion (*Aspirations to Achievement: Men Of Color And Community Colleges*, 2014). Community colleges in several states have tailored their practices by implementing programs that provide the impetus needed to influence positive mentoring experiences for African American males.

Results from various research on college success mentoring initiatives in higher education (Carter, 1994; Fowler & Muckert, 2004; Patitu & Terrell, 1997; Pfleeger & Mertz, 1995; Salinitri, 2005; Santos, Reigadas & Scott, 2000) support the value of mentoring programs in assisting students with their adjustment to college, academic performance, and persistence decisions. Race and gender specific programs have found success within higher education. Research has revealed that support is most effective when it is connected to, not isolated from, the environment in which students are asked to learn. Tinto (2001) contends that when students are immersed in an environment that is dedicated to their success, offer academic encouragement, social support, and actively involve them with peers and faculty in learning they are more likely to graduate (Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

The results of this information are intended to assist community college administrators to gain better knowledge of suitable mentoring strategies and possibly reduce the obstacles that impede academic success of African American male students. Education is a human right and the key to helping individuals escape poverty and avert generational poverty for all individuals regardless of their race, but is particularly vital for African American males.

Theoretical Framework

This study is situated in theoretical frameworks from the social science discipline and published articles and reports on community college mentoring initiatives for Black males. Shandley's (1989) concept of intentional processes, Astin's (1993) theory of involvement, and Tinto's (1993) academic and social integration theory was also used as the foundation for this study. Corollary to these frameworks are Bandura's (1986-1997) social learning theory, Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital, Astin's (1970a, 1970b, 1991) I-E-O- model and theory of involvement, Galbraith's (2001) concept of faculty involvement, Roger's (2003) model of innovation and diffusion, Fredrickson's (2004) broaden and build theory and Sorrentino's (2006) concept of empirically supported motivational strategies. This research also reviewed the similarities of mentoring programs in Fortune 1000 companies (Kahle-Piasecki & Doles, 2015). Taken as a whole, the aforementioned concepts and theories provide insight into the factors that contribute to the experiences of Black males and their mentors in a community college mentoring initiatives and provided a fuller understanding of how these relationships lead to completion.

Astin's (1970a, 1970b, 1991) I-E-O- model and theory of involvement is one of the first college impact models and views college outcomes as functions and attempts to explain how environmental factors influence student change, growth and the impact that college has on

student outcomes. Astin's (1984; 1993) input-process-output model, centers on the following three elements; *inputs*, which consist of a students' demographic characteristics, the students' *environment* and how the full range of their life experiences connects with the college environment, and lastly, *outcomes* which are the continuation of the skills and behaviors learned while in college and the maintenance of these comportments after leaving college. Bandura's (1986-1997) social learning theory is based on the assumption that people are purposeful, goal directed beings and are motivated through their beliefs and commitments. Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital assimilates social capital as the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to a network of institutionalized relationships. Shandley's (1989) concept of intentional process describes mentoring as an intentional process involving interactions between two or more individuals that fosters growth and development. Tinto's (1993) concept of institutional commitment contends that comment to student success generates a commitment on the part of students to the institution. Galbraith's (2001) concept of faculty involvement requires faculty to give more than advice. Roger's (2003) model of innovation and diffusion asserts that if programs are not implemented efficiently that they can be conceived as disruptive. Fredrickson's (2004) broaden and build theory posits that positive emotions have the ability to broaden the scope of a student's attention and perception. Lastly, Sorrentino's (2006) concept of empirically supported motivational strategies centers on the belief that mentoring programs should be empirically supportive.

The guiding framework specific to mentoring in this study will be Shandley's (1989) perception of mentoring from a higher education perspective. Shandley describes mentoring as an intentional and insightful process that involves interaction between two or more individuals. Their supportive and protective interaction fosters the growth and development of the protégé

and is an important guide to introducing the protégé to the environment for which he or she is preparing. Role modeling is also an essential component of the mentor-mentee process (Jacobi, 1991). Mentors are focused and committed to the success of their mentees. Mentor-mentee experiences increase the retention and persistence of African American male participants in community college mentoring initiatives.

Definition of Terms

In order to grasp the focus of this dissertation, a definition of terms is necessary. The definitions of terms in this section were obtained through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) post-secondary glossary of related terms. The definitions in this section correlate to key terms used to define the subjects of this study.

1. Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
2. Black, non-Hispanic (old definition): A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (except those of Hispanic origin). The context of this research will use Black male and African American (AA) male student interchangeably to describe students who are participating, have participated, or intend to participate in race and gender specific community college success programs (Glossary, n.d.).
3. “Healthy racial ethnic identity (HREI): Pride in in-group identification, confidence in one’s academic abilities, competence in awareness of racism, and comfort with respect to self- presentation of racial ethnic identity” (Wright, 2011, p. 612).
4. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU): Specially designated places of higher learning with the specific mission of educating the Black community which were established before 1964 within the United States (Wright, 2011).

5. Predominately White Institution (PWI): Term used to describe institutions of higher education in which Whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment.

Limitations of Study

The sample of this study was derived from one (1) multi-campus community college. It is possible that the findings and success rate of this program was directly attributed to strong program leadership and implementation strategies, whereas those programs that lack adequate implementation strategies and leadership may not be as successful. The focus of this study was African American male students enrolled in a two-year community college with a college mentoring initiative. Therefore, the implications of findings may not be useful in assisting Black males enrolled in four-year institutions. The final limitation that existed in this study was the possibility that more extensive probing by the researcher could have conceivably yielded additional data.

Summary

The social and economic implications associated with the miseducation of Black males is a significant phenomenon in the educational pipeline (Bonner II, 2014). Practitioners have become attentive to, and have addressed, their unique educational challenges and have implemented academic mentoring initiatives. Mentoring in institutions of higher education engages students in a process of academic, psychological and social development. Mentors undertake extraordinary accountability as knowledgeable and reliable non-parental figures for the substantial growth of other individuals (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007). Community college administrators have suggested that mentoring programs that target African American males may help increase enrollment and persistence to completion. For this reason, it is imperative that

institutions take action to implement programs that improve the experiences and academic success of its participants.

Black males who enroll in supportive, race-specific community college mentoring and retention initiatives reach completion in higher numbers. Research in the area of African American male college degree attainment has changed focus to better understand the experiences, institutional action, sociopolitical phenomena, mentoring interaction, social skills and academic preparedness that contribute to successful experiences (Harper, 2012). When given the opportunity to be involved in strategic educational mentoring programs that promote academic achievement, Black men enrolled in community college race and gender specific initiatives have had successful experiences and achieve completion (LaVant et al., 1997).

This research indicates that those community colleges which supported Black males with a full gamut of services aligned with their academic, interpersonal, social and cultural needs were more successful in guiding students to reach their academic goals and to graduate.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of research literature expands upon relevant research studies that pertain to African American males in the American educational system from prekindergarten through postsecondary education. African American males need earlier positive experiences within a learning environment to engage and prepare them for academic success. Since the educational barriers that Black male students experience are well known, “a cadre of researchers is pushing colleges to focus more on why some black men are able to succeed...[,] to more carefully measure the impact of programs intended to help black males[,] and to embrace those that look promising” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 4).

Several authors have assessed the impact of mentoring as an approach to guide mentees towards educational and professional goal achievement. The value of this qualitative study relates to the support needed to link vital mentoring strategies with college program completion objectives. When strategies and objectives intersect, an increase in positive educational experiences is likely to occur.

The literature in this section informs educational communities about the institutional conditions needed for successful mentor-mentee academic experiences. Sources captured the circumstances that began in the early grades and created the difficulties that have led to academic frustration, withdrawal, and decline in academic achievement. Community colleges have instituted innovative programs to compensate for these deficiencies, and as a result, have contributed to increasing the graduation rates of African American male students. These institutions offered mentoring programs, relevant curriculum, effective teaching, instructional

support, instructional resources, and mentorship. This research also reviewed the similarities and differences in mentoring programs in other domains.

Black Male Students P-12

There is little doubt that our education system fails huge numbers of Black males. Due to lack of access to quality early childhood opportunities, many students begin their school experience already behind. The Federal Head Start Program or other similar program can provide an early educational experience that cultivates social skills. Outside of the home environment, the school system provides the means to demonstrate acquired skills and measurable growth. A number of negative consequences arise from early experiences related to school failure including an increase in defeatedness, loss of purpose, insubordination, and isolation from peers and educational studies (Bell, 2010). Each and every academic year, the opportunity for educational decline strengthens in this population of students, which yield “[u]nequal educational opportunities...and lasting effects on academic achievement and educational completion in the short term [as well as] overall life outcomes in the long term” (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010, p. 8).

According to Bonner (2014), in more than 16,000 school districts in the American educational system since the 1980s, African American males in grades P-12 have been identified as being underachievers, experience higher dropout rates, suspensions, expulsions and are much more likely to be placed in classes for the educable intellectually disabled or in classes geared towards students with learning disabilities. African American males are seldom placed in gifted and talented education classes or on a college academic track. Half of this population do not complete high school in four years and many of them are not adequately prepared for postsecondary education, training, or work opportunities. Unfortunately, education for numerous

young African American males throughout early learning on to post-secondary involves experiences with lower achievement, academic frustration, and school failure (Ihekwaba, 2001).

The lack of social skills hinder many African American male students from productively engaging in the classroom. Basic classroom etiquette “like raising hands, being called on, and following directions are tasks that prevent an alarming number of Black males from participating in the learning process” (Bell, 2010, p. 5). Without clear ideas about how to achieve academic success, young Black males must receive directions through “various types of social skills instruction [which] must be developed and systemically taught to young African American males” (Taylor, 2003, p. 15). When classroom etiquette has not been developed, Black males tend to be viewed unfavorably by educators, posing many challenges both inside and outside of the classroom. Black male classroom behavior is often misinterpreted by teachers, and such misinterpretation inserts the unjust notion that Black males are “innately rude” or that they don’t care about education (Bell, 2010, p. 6). Furthermore, Bell (2010) asserted that regardless of intention, unproven misconceptions held by some educators such as these examples lead to destructive and damaging long-term effects for this student population.

White Female Teacher – Black Males

In the context of education, Bonner II (2014) believes that stereotyping among the predominately White teaching population has contributed to the high academic failure rates of African American males. According to the National Center for Education Information, in 2011 white female teachers represented 84 percent of the teaching profession. Only a small percentage of all teachers come from a minority background despite the much higher numbers of minority students attending public school. Moreover, public schools are likely to employ no minority teachers. This shortage which is at its lowest since 1971 (Feistritzter, 2011).

Cross-cultural student-teacher relationships can be challenging because individuals in mismatched environments often have trouble transferring values from one cultural environment to the next. Educational research has revealed several important considerations related to the social messages that Black males hear regarding their academic ability and the prejudiced opinion by some that Black boys are troublesome academically. According to Ferguson's (2000) ethnographic research, "negative teacher-student interactions were observed to be driven by White teachers' overreacting and relying on stereotypes and deficit ideologies to interpret a Black students' language and forms of self-expression" (as cited in Bonner, 2014, p. 27-28). Additionally, White teachers often perceive the behavior of minority students to be worse than that of White students (Farkas, 2003).

Moreover, Woods (2010) conducted a "qualitative, phenomenological study to investigate the most common classroom scenario: White female teachers and Black male students...[where] descriptions concerning their interactions with their Black male students...were analyzed using Whiteness Theory, White Racial Identity Theory, along with the Teacher-Child Relationship Model" (p. 1). The study examined African American male academic performance and found evidence that may be linked to elementary teacher (typically white and female) biases, as well as the cultural dispositions of others. Similarly, McRay (1994) "sampled both White and Black teacher opinions [where] [s]eventy-two percent of the subjects responded that race made a difference in teaching young African American males" (as cited in Taylor, 2003, p. 10). Many African American males internalize negative stereotypes about themselves, their looks and their abilities. It is possible that these negatively held beliefs are the reason that their academic potential has been hindered.

Other studies have found that “[y]oung African American males who have Black male teachers have better self-concepts than boys who have female teachers” (Ingrassia, 1993; Lapoint, 1992; Mancus, 1992 as cited in Taylor, 2003, p. 10). Such studies suggest that the presence of Black teachers in the classroom provides a positive role model for boys to emulate. Cultural matching among teachers and students may result in higher achievement and overall increased performance according to research (Feistritzer, 2011). However, this condition is not the only benchmark used to determine the success of the African American male college student. In order for school experiences to provide meaning, cultural values that Black males possess and schools must be matched and integrated into their own social reality about the importance of education (Taylor, 2003). As a result, the manner in which a teacher reacts to a student has a remarkable effect on student achievement.

As an illustration, teacher perception defines a student’s motivation and attachment to school. The relationships developed “between a student and his teacher... have a tremendous impact on that student, not just because of the teacher’s ability to shape the schooling experience, but also because teachers influence academic progression” (Kenyatta, 2012, p. 37). Specifically, the student-teacher dynamic shapes vital academic experiences that are essential to increasing educational success and mobilization among Black males (Kenyatta, 2012). According to Kenyatta (2012), his analysis of the multiple research studies suggested that several key factors from teachers correlate with successful Black males, such as teacher attendance and absenteeism rates as well as their ability to motivate students. These factors are due in part to the idea that “[t]eachers exert significant influence on the forming [a student’s] self-concept by constructing nurturing and positive learning environments as well as showing positive attitudes and developing rapport with [students]” (Taylor, 2003, p. 9). From the impact of the characteristics

of school system and the teacher, Black male students build foundational parts of their identity, personality, and development, in addition to what they believe about their educational abilities and skills.

However, established traditional teaching styles make it difficult for African American males to reach academic success. Schools place significance on holistic and analytical approaches and do not give consideration to the learning styles and social integration skills that the students need to experience school success (Taylor, 2003). In addition to a lack of encouragement in their elementary education experiences, “[t]he low expectations that teachers, parents, and authority figures have for African American men is one of the obstacles that hinders African American males from attending institutions of higher education” (Anderson, 2006, p. 41). The idea that black males are completely disgruntled presents a false notion that influences teachers or counselors to steer black males away from college or towards institutions with low completion rates. These erroneous stereotypes perpetuate the belief that African American males are somehow disinterested in higher education; therefore, anyone involved within the higher education system must challenge these myths (Ramirez, 2012). Faulty judgments have affected their educational development and the persistence that these students need to earn a college degree. Recognizing the factors of learning, “[a]s students enter college and gain greater autonomy over what, when, and how they study and learn, motivation plays a critical role in guiding their behaviors” (Ambrose, Bridges, Lovett, DiPietro, & Norman, 2010, p. 69). Understanding what influences African American motivation to pursue educational goals will assist students to develop successful learning behaviors. For this reason, educators have implemented mentoring programs that impart the coping and motivational strategies needed to accomplish college completion.

Socialization: Understanding the African American Male

The complexity surrounding the current opportunities for Black males in the United States arose from an “intersection of race, class, structural [racism,] institutional racism, personal responsibility, and lack of equal access to opportunity... [igniting] a fiery debate and inevitably raises questions about the historical and present-day role this nation played and continues to play in perpetrating social and economic circumstances that produce undesirable life outcomes for Black people, particularly Black males” (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010, p. 3). In 2006, a group of African American leaders assembled to discuss the state of African American males in the United States. It was certainly evident that significant change was needed to untangle the myriad of hindrances that have been inserted into the lives of the African American male. Mending original biases and unjust generalizations requires intentional efforts to develop new understandings about their difficulties (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010). Innovative intervention models that stress social and interpersonal skills are needed to address their educational problems, ultimately stressing that socialization must begin early and at home.

Family provides the first group that individuals encounter that holds a lifelong sway over their perceptions of the world with “[e]ach social class possesses economic, social, and cultural capital, which parents pass to children as attitudes, preferences, and behaviors that are invested for social profits” (Lamont and Lareau, 1988 as cited in Walpole, 2007, p. 240). This influence establishes a sense of self within the individual as well as beliefs about who they are. Such involvements lay the foundation needed to employ the motivation, values, and attitudes necessary to establish a perception about the meaning of education (Henslin, 2013).

Notably, Bronfenbrenner (1994) “argued that in order to understand human development, one must consider... five socially organized subsystems that help support and guide human

growth” (p. 37). Two of those subsystems include the microsystem and the macrosystem. The microsystem develops relationships within the physical environment in which the individual belongs, while the macrosystem deals with cultural and institutional parts of one’s environment. Researcher Amy E. Hilgendorf endorses Bronfenbrenner’s proposition and believes that parent involvement in schooling and its influence hold promise for closing the achievement gap in education. Given the attention surrounding the role of parental involvement, “[r]esearchers have examined differences in parent involvement and its influence by socioeconomic status and race and ethnicity and have described various ways in which parents’ involvement takes shape, both in home and school settings” (Hilgendorf, 2012, p. 112).

Regardless of race, individuals are products of the social environments to which they have been exposed and within which they have been nurtured. “[Increased] understanding of the influences” and family roles within African American families may hold significant meaning for the reasons black families support their child’s education in ways that are different from other races (Hilgendorf, 2012, p. 127). Family involvement in education is not a new concept, but the manner in which African American parents define involvement is wide-ranging. A central belief is that children go to college to get good jobs that will enable them to pursue a successful career (Myers, 2013). It is not necessary that parents have a formal education to understand the importance of educational achievement for their children. To illustrate, uneducated slaves set free by the Emancipation Proclamation impressed the importance of “book learning” upon youths from the very beginning.

Given the research that has worked to understand the roles of family and parental involvement with early academic experiences, “researchers may come to better understand and utilize the variety of sources and forms of school-related support that African American students

experience” (Hilgendorf, 2012, p. 127). In today’s society, African American parents stress the necessity of obtaining an education regardless of their educational attainment. The most influential mentors for all students are adults who respect and revere education (Price, 2002).

Mentoring

*The light which experience gives is a lantern on the stern,
which shines only on the waves behind us.*

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Though it may seem like a modern concept, the mentoring process has roots in ancient Greek culture, and it has a multitude of applications, particularly in postsecondary education. In mentoring, intentional interactions occur within a relationship. These interactions take place among a group of at least two people, where there the relationship roles include mentor and a protégé (or mentee). Growing out of these interactions, the mentoring process allows for “a nurturing process that fosters the growth and development of the protégé...in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the protégé” (LaVant et al., 1997, p. 44). Furthermore, mentoring programs and the relationships that grow out of these programs have been utilized for “transferring knowledge from more experienced individuals to less experienced individuals and...[t]he benefits...have been documented in countless studies over the past 29 years beginning with Kram’s (1985) research on mentoring in organizations” (Kahle-Piasecki & Doles, 2015, p. 74). In like manner, mentoring is a useful tool in career areas like healthcare, vocational occupations and Fortune 500 companies.

When discussing the development of mentoring programs within a community college setting, Galbraith (2001) quickly asserts that mentoring support “is far more than giving advice” (as cited in Galbraith & James, 2004, p. 690). Mentoring is a laborious and time consuming

process for faculty members and students and encompasses more than offering advice, because mentoring is “the sense of helping someone learn how to ‘be’ rather than what to ‘do’” (Block, Blanchard, Wheatley, Autry, & Covey, 1998, p. 336). Because community colleges offer numerous programs of study and vocational tracks, African American males are often perplexed and need assistance and guidance from the beginning.

When attending a community college for the first time, African American males must choose a suitable educational program that matches their life goals, yet they may lack the ability to rationally or confidently make this selection (Erlich & Russ-Eft, 2011). This group of largely uninformed students is more concerned with obtaining a good paying job or progressing beyond the community college into a four-year institution. Mentoring provides an opportunity to positively affect academic outcomes and “is generally perceived as a vertically structured process whereby a trustworthy, prosocial adult affords learning experiences to a younger person ‘requiring’ direction and support” (Hall, 2015, p. 39).

Bandura (1994) constructed his social cognitive theory under the belief that the humans experience life in similar ways; thus, they gain insight by interacting with successful models who encourage others to become equally successful. According to him, self-efficacy refers to one’s confidence for engaging in specific activities that lead to goal attainment.

Mentoring has acquired a national position “as a vital and essential component in the personal, educational, and professional experiences of learners in community colleges” (Galbraith & James, 2004, p. 690). Youth programs with a mentoring feature have gained a substantial amount of research-based support within the last twenty years (Hall, 2015). However, the outreach programs targeting African American males “tend to stress the development on campus of a viable community of students of similar ethnicity, [where] the need for such

communities and the social and emotional support they provide is obvious” (Tinto, 1993, p. 186). Students may be less likely to view themselves as in need of the support provided through mentoring programs or may not realize all that a mentoring program has to offer them.

The overall purpose of community college mentoring programs is to help African American males understand the intricacies of college academic and social systems, to circumvent any challenges that higher education generates, and to support them throughout their development in becoming self-directed critical thinkers. In its applicability and importance, mentoring exists as an old idea that still holds meaning in today’s community college environment. The designation of mentor has an extensive and needed influence in the personal, educational, and professional experiences of African American males (Galbraith & James, 2004). African American males encounter difficulties while seeking to become incorporated into the social and learning environment required to be successful in community college and beyond. Special mentor programs are an effective way to increase retention for Black males. In many instances, programs are designed to provide students with faculty mentors who undertake the responsibility to guide them through the institution (Tinto, 1993).

A careful review of the literature demonstrates that mentoring is a viable intervention process that enhances retention and success, and that mentoring creates opportunities for the underrepresented African American male college student (LaVant et al., 1997). Mentoring has grown in national prominence as a central and crucial component in the educational, personal and professional development of learners (Galbraith & James, 2004). Well-documented and supported, “[r]esults from several studies on mentoring in higher education support the value of mentoring programs in assisting students with their adjustment to college, academic performance,” persistence, and decision making (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007, p. 71).

According to Sorrentino (2006), it is advisable for mentoring programs to employ empirically supported motivational strategies to ensure retention regardless of race. This approach has been shown to influence a student's motivation, effort, and persistence (Sorrentino, 2006). Findings indicate that developing meaningful relationships and active engagement produces educational benefits and contributes to academic success. Mentoring programs that target African American male college students may help increase enrollment and persistence towards graduation. The implementation of mentoring programs appears to be an effective supplemental support to overcome the barriers that hinder successful college completion for African American males.

Community colleges have emphasized the recruitment of African American males for participation in mentoring programs. Researchers and others associated with education have claimed that participation in formalized support systems establishes a connection between community college personnel and students from the moment they arrive on campus (LaVant et al., 1997). Mentoring instills the tenacity needed to successfully set and reach educational goals. Over time, community colleges have equipped themselves with learning communities and much needed gender and race specific mentoring programs to address academic shortcomings and the social interaction necessary to encourage completion.

Similarities: Workplace Mentoring and Higher Education

Studies in corporate leadership have shown that the majority of companies attribute the successful development of future leaders to mentoring (Zachary & Fischler, 2010). Kahle-Piasecki (2011) conducted a performance gap analysis on current mentoring programs in Fortune 1000 companies. The results of this study revealed that formal (74%) and informal (72%) mentoring practices were effective as reported by the majority of participants. The similarities of

mentoring programs between Fortune 1000 corporations and higher education show that formal programs are frequently used and effective (Doles, 2008; Kahle-Piasecki, 2011). Structured mentoring programs have also gained popularity in additional career areas.

Mentoring relationships also offer a viable form of support within vocational trade careers. Mentor relationships have assisted in increasing apprenticeship completion rates (Dowling et al., 2005). In this sector, informal mentoring is encouraged with the assumption that supportive networks will naturally evolve. This approach to mentoring employs a foundation that allows for relationship building to occur as it would in normal circumstances within their environment. Such methods permit students to refocus their attention on finishing their education and dilutes the presence of destructive behaviors (Corney & du Plessis, 2010).

Mentoring has also been used as a retention strategy in the rural and remote healthcare workforce. After implementation of mentoring, “participants in medical mentoring programs report high levels of satisfaction [and] career success” (Bourke, Waite, & Wright, 2014, p. 3). Unfortunately, the literature addressing this topic is sparse. However, formal and informal mentoring is reported as anecdotal among rural and remote healthcare practitioners. The implementation of mentoring in this area serves as a way to support the rural workforce (Bourke et al., 2014). Mentoring rural and remote healthcare professionals allows for personal and professional growth and provides practitioners support during difficult times.

The similarities among mentoring programs observed in higher education, healthcare, vocational apprenticeships, and the business field, and the frequency with which these programs are implemented, indicate that formal mentoring programs are effective (Doles, 2008; Kahle-Piasecki, 2011). The structured approach to mentoring offers a systemic methodology that is usually arranged by the organization (Kahle-Piasecki & Doles, 2015). Comparably, community

colleges, businesses and corporations are all driven by importance of retaining students and employees. Thus, mentoring delivers career, social, and emotional support for self-exploration which leads to positive academic and personal outcomes for students (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Johnson, 2006) and guides them to toward success. Research has shown substantial benefits of mentoring in organizations. Therefore, it is logical to accept that it also benefits students enrolled in community colleges. Mentoring has a significant impact on mentored minority as compared to non-mentored minority student academic success (Cantwell, Archer & Bourke, 1997). More significantly, the community college serves as the primary pathway for Black male students into postsecondary education. In fact, 70.5% of Black men who enter postsecondary education do so through the community college (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2009).

Community College Mentoring Models

Various models of successful community college mentoring programs exist for African American male community college students. Cincinnati State Technical and Community College's Black Male Initiative mentoring program was created in September, 2006. This program seeks to provide motivation to achieve educational goals while enhancing educational experiences. The program also provides direction for overcoming difficult issues and offers a forum for discussion. Participants establish meaningful mentoring relationships, receive financial aid counseling, develop financial awareness, and are monitored academically ("Black Male Initiative," n.d.).

Montgomery County Community College's Minority Male Mentoring was implemented in 2009. The program focuses on African American males who as a result of low placement test scores, are placed in two or more developmental courses. Faculty, administrators and staff volunteer to serve as mentors. The goal of the mentor- mentee relationship is to guide student

participants through higher education processes. In addition to mentoring, participants receive personal and career training and opportunities for community engagement. The college also participates in the Dream National Reform Network ("Minority male mentoring program," n.d.).

The community college serves as the primary pathway for Black (and other minority) males students into postsecondary education. For many Black males, community colleges are often the most feasible choice for earning a degree. Due to open admissions policies, community colleges appear to be the best educational institution to address the plight of all academically unprepared students, especially African American males.

These mentoring initiatives developed into “an effective tool in providing the support necessary to overcome the barriers... [to] contribut[e] to the survival and empowerment of African American men, and [to enhance] their ability to make plausible gains in higher education” (LaVant et al., 1997, p. 52). Presently, research proclaims that much of the success that Black male students achieve should be credited to mentoring. It is vital that administrators develop strategies to implement programs that positively affect retention and completion rates.

Institutional Action

Population and gender-specific intervention programs are an important complement to the education of Black males. Advocating for the youth without representation translates into a powerful social justice goal for all involved in education. More importantly, significant economic changes within the United States have required more and more education or training beyond a secondary diploma. This revelation reinforces the fact that college graduation exists as a crucial component to transforming the social and economic status quo (Polite & Davis, 1999). “There must be equity in the college pipeline” (Brown & Bartee, 2009, p. 93), therefore, it is imperative for educational institutions to foster the academic growth and success of African

American males enrolled in community college There is a need for educators to support the success of Black male students through academic mentoring programs. Programs should be modeled after structured programs that have proven successful based on empirical and theoretical insights. It is crucial that programs are constructed in a manner that addresses the unique educational challenges that confront Black males upon their arrival to community college campuses (Bonner, 2014).

Understanding the dynamics of mentoring initiatives is key to planning successful implementation. The success of these initiatives hinges on the fact that community college personnel will need to assume new roles and responsibilities. These adjustments will alter the manner in which students approach their school work (Morest, 2013). Rogers's (2003) model of innovation diffusion was developed through research dating back to 1940's and can be applied to innovations in educational settings. Innovation diffusion on a college campus begins with the innovation decision process, which "spreads through certain communication channels over time among the members of a social system" (Rogers, 2004, p. 13). If programs are not implemented efficiently, innovation can be perceived as being disruptive (Yuksel, 2014). Individuals embrace change in different ways, and are inherently more or less prone to not being agreeable to a new innovation. Because college personnel differ with regard to the speed with which they adopt innovations, Rogers's five categories of adopters can be applied in the educational environment (Yuksel, 2014). On a graph, the number of adopters at various times in the adoption process would be distributed along a normally distributed bell-shaped curve. A small number of innovators at one end, a small number of non-adapters at the other end, and a larger number of 'majority adapters' in the middle. Innovators usually represent 2.5 %; early adopters 13.5 %; early majority adopters 34 %; late majority 34 % and laggards 16 %. (Rogers, 2003). Innovators

embrace innovations more than others and are usually intrepid and the first to test new processes. Early adopters tend to be respected leaders in society and are open to change. Individuals that fall within the early majority category tend to be deliberate about their decision to adopt new processes and cautious and reluctant to take risks. Traditionalist laggards are very suspicious of new ideas and rarely adopt an innovation unless it is mandatory (Yuksel, 2014).

In order for innovation to occur, implementation starts gradually then quickens once early majority adopters become involved. This process happens because “by the time the late majority adopters are transitioning to acceptance, adoption of the innovation is halfway complete” (Morest, 2013, p. 89). The promptness of initiative implementation at community colleges can be influenced by unionization, financial means, communication and support from administrators. Because communication is critical to the adoption of strategies, adoption plans are essential in deciding how information is disseminated (Morest, 2013). Successful program execution normally takes several years to develop. Tinto’s (1993) concept of institutional commitment contends that comment to student success generates a commitment on the part of students to the institution.

Institutional Commitment

Institutions that are committed to their goal of increasing student success, especially among low-income and underrepresented students, have found a way to achieve this goal. Even though “men of color are underrepresented in higher education overall, those who enroll in college are more likely to attend a community college than a baccalaureate institution” as the educational environment provided by community colleges tend to be more supportive to the needs of this population of students (*Aspirations To Achievement: Men Of Color And Community Colleges*, 2014, p. 4). Often times, this group has nontraditional student characteristics given that

“[b]lack men in community college are more likely to be older, be classified as low-income, have dependents, be married, and have delayed their enrollment in higher education” (Wood & Williams, 2013, p. 3).

Community colleges have entered into a new way of improving outcomes for men of color through the implementation of mentoring initiatives. By supporting students through outreach programs, the structure of this educational institution demonstrates “more than just words, more than just mission statements issued in elaborate brochures; it is the willingness of the institution to invest resources and provide incentives and rewards needed to enhance student success” (Tinto & Pusser, 2006, p. 6). Black male student success needs dedicated commitment in order to maintain long-term success. Tinto further asserts that “commitment is the basis for student persistence” (Tinto, 1993, p. 146).

It is apparent that successful academic achievement programs reside in an institution’s commitment to educating students. During the last ten years, major reforms have developed and grown under the guidance of community college administrators around the nation. For example, “[a]s of spring 2012, there are 167 participating and 17 former Achieving the Dream colleges focusing on improving student success” (Morest, 2013, p. 92). Institutional commitment is an integral part of an institution’s mission that must be actively pursued in order to achieve the overarching goal, student learning. In more “direct language, effective retention programs do not leave learning to chance” (Tinto, 1993, p. 147). Administrators, faculty, staff and students are obligated to engage collectively in activities that reinforce the likelihood that actual learning occurs and degree completion is accomplished (Tinto, 1993). In order to ensure effective program success, institutions should be duty bound to the long and arduous process of program development and implementation. Successful programs often become centers of excellence that

reshape student behavior. This success boosts recruitment and involvement of future participants in the effort that enhance student education (Tinto, 1993). Ultimately, institutions and those individuals in charge can empower their African American male undergraduates through mentoring connections, which is essential to academic achievements and graduation (Smith, Estudillo, & Kang, 2010).

Institutional Agents and Social Capital

Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital with as “actual or potential resources that are linked to a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition or in other words, to memberships with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (as cited in Museus & Neville, 2012, p. 437). In other words, social capital includes any resources that can be accessed and help to give social power to its members and validity to their social experiences. From this notion, the model of social capital has been credited with encouraging outcomes across all educational sectors for minority students. Identified as sources of engaging learning experiences, the presence of “social capital, trust, and closure can be useful in understanding the impact that institutional agents can and have on the experiences and outcomes of college students of color” (Museus & Neville, 2012, p. 437). Institutions that bind African American males to broader institutional networks generate success. For this reason, college educators can effectively foster success among African American males.

Social capital is also a set of connections that arranges access to material and nonmaterial means. These resources construct a conduit to a way of life that reaps lifelong benefits (Brown II & Bartee, 2009). Learning cultural and the behavior styles of African American males is an effective strategy to implement successful academic success programs.

President Obama's Effect

The majority of the current findings accentuate the negative stereotypes, microaggressions, history of prejudice, drug abuse, depression, at risk behaviors, and violence associated with the most stigmatized group in the United States, African American males (Spurgeon & Myers, 2010). A few studies have identified coping mechanisms, such as racial identity, that help mitigate these risk factors (e.g. Cokely, 2000). Overall, a strong sense of racial identity impacts Black men's healthy self-image and positive psychological health, "specifically for those attending predominantly White universities (PWI; Pillay, 2005) but studies of racial identity and wellness in Black males are lacking" (as cited in Spurgeon & Myers, 2010, p. 528).

A multitude of theories (Erikson, 1963, 1968; Marcia, 1966, 1980) and models (Cross, 1971, 1991; Helms, 1995; Phinney, 1990) encourage racial and ethnic development through identity exploration in order to form a healthy view of oneself. Influenced by perspectives from Erickson (1963, 1980) and Marcia (1966, 1980), Jean Phinney (1989, 1990) suggested a model of ethnic identity development applicable to any cluster of students. Under this three-stage process model, "individuals start in an unexamined state with the potential to move into a period of exploration or identity search...[where they] are described as either holding no strong ideas about their ethnicity (a diffused identity) or ascribing to attitudes taught by adult authority figures (a foreclosed identity)" (Fuller-Rowell et al., 2011, p. 1608). Immediately following the unexamined state, the next stage of this process is called ethnic identity search, where individuals explore their ethnic backgrounds in order to derive some sense of personal meaning (moratorium). Upon completion, the last stage occurs called ethnic identity achievement. Since individuals appreciate and understand multifaceted concepts at this time, this stage of identity development is significant for the African American male college student, specifically as they

grow to feel proud of their ethnicity. This time is when they enter the adult world with societal pressure, and the implications for academic missteps is important. In addition to the risks associated with school failure, this group has also struggled to find empowerment through the development of a healthy racial self-image associated with their personal identity (Spurgeon & Myers, 2010).

Barack Obama's presidency in the United States grants a window into the influence that this sociopolitical event has on African American college students. "Given Barack Obama's ability to evoke positive emotions such as hope and pride, as well as his highly publicized message of inclusion and social unity, one could reasonably predict that individuals primed to think about Obama might respond with increased positive emotions and perspective-taking in social situations" (Ong, Burrow, & Fuller-Rowell, 2012, p. 424). Fredrickson (1998, 2001) asserts within the broaden-and-build theory that positive emotions prompt individuals to open their minds and allow change to occur. Positive emotions can have a marked influence on cognitive processes and expand an individual's "thought action repertoires and build enduring personal resources. The function of all positive emotions has been identified as facilitating approach behavior (Cacioppo et al. 1993; Davidson 1993; Frijda 1994) or continued action (Carver & Scheier 1990; Clore 1994)" (as cited in Fredrickson, 2004, p. 1368-1369). From this understanding, the emission of positive emotions promote community engagement, where many individuals change according to the environment and activity more readily. This concept connects well with Black male students because "there is empirical evidence that positive emotions can broaden people's social perception, making them more likely to see connections and similarities between themselves and others [making it] conceivable that positive emotions

generated from cueing or priming from Barack Obama may” shape Black males self-image in comparison with others (Ong, Burrow, & Fuller-Rowell, 2012, p. 424-425).

Also, Ong, Burrow, & Fuller-Rowell (2012) cited Barack Obama as a powerful role model to young Black males and their developing self-image associated with their identity. Acting as a role model for success, Obama and has the influence to evoke strong emotions within these young males under his presidency and continued to serve as an inspiration model for all. As a result, Black males are more inspired and motivated to become members of positive social groups. They may develop a stronger sense of trust and expand their identity building across their new found group members, creating much deeper bonds (Ong et al, 2012).

In reviewing the outcomes from Ong’s (2012) study after “African American college students were prompted to write about Obama immediately prior to and after the 2008 presidential election [,]... [m]ediation analysis revealed that writing about Obama increased positive emotions, which in turn increased the likelihood that people thought” (Ong et al, 2012, p. 424) more deeply about inclusivity within superordinate groups. Instruction asked participants to collect their thoughts about the historical election of an African American president and to record these emotions in written form (Pennebaker, 2002). The control group wrote about procedures and events that they experienced each day utilizing standard control procedure in expressive-writing studies. Participants recorded and completed 597 (71%) of 840 opportunities to note participation. Researcher analysis “focused on three linguistic indicators validated in previous research: plural self-references (we, us, our), social references (mention of friends, family and sharing)” and “other references (he, she, they, them)” (Ong et al., 2012, p. 425). As anticipated before reviewing results, the subjects who wrote about Obama “expressed greater positive emotionality in their writing than did those in the control” (Ong et al., 2012, p. 426).

Therefore, self-esteem, self-concept, racial identity and pride affects a student's achievement and motivation. African American males seek greater understanding and recognize the importance of adapting to the environment in which they are immersed (Bonner, 2014).

African American Male Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura (1994), believing that one has the capacity to manage his or her own self including actions, speech, and feelings describes the process of self-efficacy. Developing a strong sense of self-efficacy enables individual to reach their goals, which explains why social cognitive-learning theory holds considerable influence over this concept (Wood, Newman, & Harris III, 2015). Bandura's self-efficacy (1994) asserted that "being purposive" encourages individuals to set high goals; therefore, "the stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goal challenges people set for themselves and the firmer is their commitment to them" (p. 3).

Within a school setting, the role of self-efficacy impacts a student's ability to become successful as it relates to every aspect of educational achievement including gaining knowledge, synthesizing learning and assessments, and participating within the daily routines of class. All in all, academic mentoring instills greater levels of self-efficacy, which leads to greater academic outcomes (Wood, Newman, & Harris III, 2015). Bandura (1994) claims that an individual's beliefs and expectations with regard to one's capabilities becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as those feelings impact future actions. From his ideas, the individual possesses the capacity of fulfilling one's desires, in which self-efficacy enables and empowers the achievement of those aspirations. Beliefs about self-efficacy correlate to academic achievement, performance expectations, self-perceptions of competence (Hackett et al., 1992; Stipek, 1984), and possessing positive attitudes toward subject matter (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy beliefs are acquired from

four main sources: (a) progressive performance accomplishments (i.e., academic success); (b) vicarious experiences (role models); (c) verbal messages and social persuasions that affirm one's capabilities in the domain or at the task; and (d) physiological states (i.e., anxiety, stress, fatigue, and moodiness), all of which can raise or lower one's sense of self-efficacy (Pajares, 1996).

Research demonstrates the benefit of self-efficacy, though it receive little attention in the discussion of college achievements by Black or other minority males. Results from the studies conducted demonstrates that student self-efficacy is “a resilience factor in the college persistence process” (Wood, Newman, & Harris III, 2015, p. 4). Additionally, Tinto (1993) asserts that Black male students graduation rate increase in:

institutions which are committed to the education of their students and are willing to tell students when it is in their interests to leave are also those institutions that are more likely to have students who are committed to the institution. As a consequence, they will also retain more of their students to degree completion. Furthermore, those institution that are committed to their students will very likely also be those that fare better in the more limited academic marketplace of the future (p. 209).

Academic self-efficacy has been associated with achievement-related behaviors and outcomes. Thus, mentoring supports the self-efficacy philosophy and is therefore associated with positive faculty interactions.

In researching the importance of self-efficacy, Reid (2013), found Black male college students typically earned higher achievements if they possessed a positive self-identity and high levels of self-efficacy, especially while attending predominantly White institutions. The study hoped to explain the successful achievement of Black males. The intersection of self-efficacy,

academic integration, and collegiate GPA are strongly correlated, according to the study results. Furthermore, these correlations extend to ideas from Tinto (1993) where his model purports that “the impact of individual attributes cannot be understood without reference to social and intellectual context within which individuals find themselves” (p. 113). Thus, building relationships, whether with faculty, staff, or peers, reinforces and directs Black males toward academic success. Moreover, the study revealed “a weak but positive and significant correlation between self-efficacy and Academic Integration ($r = .182$, $p = .013$), which could mean that confident students are more apt to approach faculty, or strong faculty ties increase academic confidence (Reid, 2013, p. 81). In addition to the positive link to collegiate GPA, confirming earlier studies that revealed a link between certain pre-college preparation and college success (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Johnson, 1993; Strayhorn, 2010).

Black males who participated in this study maintained “that they would be successful in college even after accounting for their SAT scores, high school grades, college major, and their parents’ education and income” (Reid, 2013, p. 85). Validity of the hypothesis was confirmed by the study’s results, demonstrating that self-efficacy holds remarkable weight in determining achievement and success; thus, the outcome reveals the association between self-efficacy and academic integration.

As self-efficacy increases, students’ stress and anxiety decrease. Additionally, self-efficacy improved students’ social and cultural adaptations to college life as well as impacting the students’ overall satisfaction in their academic experience and quality of life. Other findings pointed to “[improved] writing-grammar performance ability..., [supported] the development of challenging goals..., [and advanced] individuals pursuit of personal and academic development” (Wood, Newman, & Harris III, 2015, p. 4).

The unity of self-efficacy, determination, and achievement describes the necessary skill combination for Black males to succeed in higher education institutions. Coping and resiliency also provide additional strengths which are crucial to success and engagement within settings of racial and cultural mismatches (Wood, Newman, & Harris III, 2015).

In reviewing other literature highlighting the area of self-efficacy within a community college setting, one study from Wood, Newman, & Harris (2015) reviewed Black males' anxiety toward a particular subject (mathematics), their perceived preparedness for the course, and their level of self-efficacy, which was found to have a strong relationship among these areas.

According to Wood, Newman, & Harris III (2015), the relationship existed as one where increased levels of self-efficacy minimized the feeling of anxiety, with additional relationships stemming from academic preparation. However, students' experiences in community colleges remain overlooked in this realm of postsecondary research literature. Investing self-efficacy building measures allows the educational institution to "determine how much effort people will expend on an activity, how long they will persevere when confronting obstacles, and how resilient they will prove in the face of adverse situations" (Pajares, 1996, p. 544). As one's self-efficacy increases, so does the individual's level of effort, persistence, and resiliency. Various forms of social skill preparation must be developed and imparted upon African American male students.

Black Male Community College Collegians

Literature concerning Black males in community colleges describes five variable domains relative to achieving academic success. Domains consist of social, non-cognitive, academic, environmental, and institutional experiences. The constructs of each domain are influenced by three sets of precollege considerations, which include goal setting, family

background, and societal norms. The interaction between precollege factors and the five factors affect the success of Black males in community college (Bonner II, 2014).

Bean and Eaton (2001) “assert that academic and social integration [to be the] outcomes of psychological processes that begin prior to college and are modified during college” (as cited in Wood et al., 2015, p. 4). Upon entering college and before beginning his studies, a male African American student begins to consider and evaluate his ability to perform academically. Personal evaluations serve as a catalyst to determine their ability to be successful and achieve success through graduation (Wood et al., 2015).

Given that minority students often attend public two-year educational institutions, “[t]he vast majority of these two year college attendees (81.9%)” attend community college (U.S. Department of Education, 2004-2009). Based on community colleges’ mission of providing post-secondary opportunities for all, “Black males attend community colleges” with hopes of better “[facilitating] their social and economic advancement” (Wood & Williams, 2013, p. 2). With a graduation rate of 16% within a three year period, every population graduates at higher rates than that of the Black male community college students, regardless of whether comparing rates among other races, cultures, and genders. The reality of these staggering rates translates to a great number of men exiting the community college system entirely within the first few years despite the enrollment rates of Black males (Wood, Newman, Harris III, 2015).

As previously stated, “Black males lack social resources and support to complete college” which places graduation out of reach (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010, p. 10). Another factor contributing the imbalances among Blacks enrolled in college is the high school-dropout rate. An additional significant factor includes the general notion that “Black male students across education levels reportedly place considerable effort into being perceived as popular and ‘cool’

by their peers” (Harper & Davis, 2012, p. 104). Also, according to Harper & Davis (2012), socialization and peer pressure have a major impact upon Black males’ educational decisions and must not be overlooked.

Providing consistent pathways toward successful post-secondary educational experiences must become a key focus at the institutional level. Many educators and administrators have begun to explore the reason behind high attrition rates and other challenges faced by Black male college students (Harper & Harris, 2012). In an effort to address this problem, more and more culturally sensitive mentoring initiatives have been established to target these issues and better understand how and why some Black males avoid the pitfalls that can undermine a successful college experience.

One effort, the mission of the We Dream A World: The 2025 Vision for Black Men and Boys Initiatives, seeks to enhance growth of Black men and boys through initiatives where total development in multiple areas occur. Total development includes “the educational, social, emotional, physical, spiritual, political and economic development and empowerment of Black men and boys” (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010, p. iv). The ultimate goal of this campaign strives to combat the barriers that Black males face by creating public awareness and creating a national dialogue where this population gains agency through knowledge, resources, services, and support. They believe that this initiative “will narrow the gaps in academic achievement, access to meaningful employment, parenting efficacy and measures of health and well-being” (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2010, p. 49).

However, these initiatives miss an essential component: “a complementary policy agenda that aims to improve Black men’s college readiness, postsecondary educational outcomes, and degree attainment rates” (Harper & Harris, 2012, p. 1). It is critical for community

college educators to better understand how they can most effectively and positively foster the academic experiences of African American males who attend community colleges.

With the goal of providing aid to Black male students, the Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center for the African American Male was established in 2004 at the Ohio State University. According Feintuch (2010), the goals of this center focus on aiding Black males in college success by offering multiple programs. In order to guide to young African Americans, this initiative serves to assist this population through the transition to university life and expectations. Bell, the Center's founder, had "a deep concern for the plight of African American males" (Feintuch, 2010, p. 18), which motivated him to engage Black males prior to enrollment by inviting them to prepare for college within their program. The program assists this population of students with their transition to the Ohio State University, to take away anxiety, and to extend resources to better enable them to focus on being a student. Also, the center also presents opportunities for workshops, educational seminars, and networking as well as other programs where students can improve their skills. Such opportunities allowed for success: "[s]ince the Center's founding, the retention rate of Black male students has risen considerably [from]...80.7 percent [to] 89.3 percent on par with that of Ohio state University's general population at 92.8 percent" (Feintuch, 2010, p. 18).

By actively seeking and supporting Black males through mentoring programs, they are more likely to become successful in their chosen field of study, and ultimately, they work until completion toward graduation (Warde, 2008). According to Warde, Greek life offers guidance and support among peer groups, because the opportunity for individuals of the same race to have positive interactions and develop meaningful relationships through these experiences, which in turn seek to ward off social alienation and promotes positive perseverance toward their

aspirations. All of these supportive measures aid Black male students as they near completion and graduation.

In an effort to encourage African American males to stay in community college, mentoring programs have been established to help members of this group find success. The goal of these programs is to equip them with the skills and motivation needed to successfully navigate their way through higher education processes and to increase the percentage of Black males who reach completion (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007). Galbraith and Maslin-Ostrowski (2000) maintain “mentoring to be a process of intellectual, psychological, and affective development...mentors accept personal responsibility as competent and trustworthy nonparent figures for the significant growth of other individuals” (pp. 690-691). The concept of mentoring offers an opportunity for Black males who do not have role models find success in obtaining their degree. Outcomes from mentoring studies “support the value of mentoring programs in assisting students with their adjustment to college, academic performance, and persistence decisions” (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007, p. 71). Mentoring encourages interactions between faculty and administrative staff as well as other supportive role models. Mentoring initiatives serve as a fundamental function and valuable component to increasing the number of Black males who achieve community college completion (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007).

Summary

A review of literature revealed that a gap exists regarding the study of college mentoring initiatives for African American males as a way to foster successful college completion. The intention of this study is to reduce this gap by surveying the mentor-mentee experiences of past mentoring program participants and their mentors in a community college mentoring initiative.

Shaun R. Harper (2012), Director for the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, and others have argued that there is much to learn from Black men who have been successful and that one sided emphasis on failure and low performing Black male undergraduates should be equalized with insights from those who have earned a college degree.

This chapter studied the theoretical frameworks of Astin's (1970a, 1970b, 1991) I-E-O-model and theory of involvement, Bandura's (1986-1997) social learning theory, and Shandley's (1989) concept of intentional process. The chapter also took into account the theoretical frameworks of Astin's (1993) theory of involvement, Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital, Shandley's (1989) concept of intentional process, Tinto's (1993) concept of institutional commitment, Galbraith's (2001) concept of faculty involvement, Roger's (2003) model of innovation and diffusion, Fredrickson's (2004) broaden and build theory, and Sorrentino's (2006) concept of empirically supported motivational strategies. This study's theoretical basis and methodology to describe the relationship between mentors and mentees will be presented in chapter three.

Overall, community colleges admit students who possess interest, experiences and goals congruent with its mission and educational offerings. According to the California Postsecondary Education Commission 2006 Report, Black males attend community colleges in greater number than Black females (Cook, Bush, & Bush, 2008). Again, two-year colleges provide the first experience for African American males, and for many, it is chance for education beyond high school (Bush & Bush, 2005). Longstanding models of retention and persistence have been useful in providing a foundation to develop the interaction factors that influence retention and college success for African American males. Black male student completion initiatives that include

mentoring appear to have a positive approach for student engagement (Knapp, Kelly-Reid and Ginder, 2011).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of mentor-student experiences as a way to foster successful community college completion for past participants of an African American male community college mentoring initiative and their mentors. With the goals of offering answers through an intensive evaluation of the social characteristics of people and the setting in which they live, “qualitative researchers...are most interested in how humans arrange themselves...and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles” (Berg, 2004, p. 7). As described in Chapter 2, educators and administrators at many levels have employed numerous remedies to improve African American men’s pathways to and through post-secondary education. Research questions and the participant interview protocol were devised from Shandley’s (1989) concept of mentoring in higher education processes, Locke’s (1991) goal setting theory, Fredrickson’s (2004) broaden and build theory of positive emotions, Bandura’s (1986, 1997) social cognitive – learning theory, Tinto’s (1993) concept of developing supportive student communities and Sorrentino’s (2006) contribution to the SEEK Program at the College of Staten Island CUNY.

In support of these considerations, this qualitative study was based on the experiences of six former participants of a community college mentoring initiative and three mentors. A combination of one hour, face-to-face interviews, and artifacts related to participation in the African American Male Schools Initiative (AAMS) such as awards, keepsakes, documents, and a collection of demographic information was used to increase the depth of the study to bring forward a better assessment of program significance. This approach disclosed a better understanding of how mentoring contributes to the development of the behavior required to

reach academic goals. Interview protocol focused on the impact of mentors, student involvement, programs and services, campus climate and peers. Challenges in regard to academic success were also assessed. Depictions of experiences that were collected offered a perspective of the tenacity required to be academically successful. This study is significant because it contributes to the body of knowledge about this type mentoring and provides insight into the motivational strategies, mentoring relationships, academic development, institutional support, academic confidence and social skills development activities that compel students to focus on reaching the educational milestones necessary to graduate. Findings may possibly provide support for programs falling short of meeting program goals.

The results of this study are intended to assist community college administrators to gain a better knowledge of suitable strategies to reduce the obstacles that impede academic success and empower their program participants.

Research Questions

This research will use data gathered through interviews with past participants of an African American male community college mentoring initiative to better develop an understanding of the mentoring experiences that inspired, shaped, and impacted the successful completion of their programs of study. Additional information was gathered through interviews with college mentors regarding their perceived impact with students in the program. This qualitative study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of past participants of a community college African American mentoring initiative related to the impact mentoring had on their achieving program completion?

2. What are the perceptions of current mentors in a community college African American mentoring initiative related to their impact on helping students achieve program completion?

Research Site: Urban Community College (UCC)

Urban Community College-Bernard Campus was the only site involved in this study. Urban Community College-Bernard Campus was selected based on its commitment to fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion. Urban Community College is an important gateway in the area to higher education for African American males and other career options. Urban Community College African American Male Scholars (AAMS) is an academic mentoring and retention program for male minority students, especially African Americans. AAMS is comprised of frequent mentor-mentee interactions and is designed to provide the support needed to achieve academic success. In addition, the program makes an effort to disable the barriers that could possibly hinder participants from being successful in the 21st century. The program is associated with the Achieving the Dream National Reform Network. Achieving the Dream is the national leader in championing evidence-based institution improvement. Urban Community College is about student learning from expert faculty in a learning-centered environment. UCC African American Scholars Program encourages student leadership, engagement in service learning activities, and participation in college activities. The overarching goal of the program is improve the college experience and academic ability of all participants and increase retention and completion rates ("African American Male Scholars (AAMS)," 2013). The uniqueness of Urban Community College AAMS program provided a unique setting to explore questions about African American male academic success.

Urban Community College is a multi-campus community college governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees who are nominated by the county council. Urban Community College

is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education to award associates degrees, certificates and diplomas. Urban Community College's student enrollment in 2015-2016 consisted of 27,430 credit, 17,879 noncredit and 44,599 total unduplicated headcount. Since 2000, Urban Community College has served 512,415 students of whom 395,113 were Urban Community (pseudonym) residents. The student profile is comprised of 58 percent women and 42 percent men, with 28 percent representing ethnic minorities (Urban Community College Public Relations & Marketing, 2016).

Table 1 represents Urban Community College's students by race and gender during the selected years. During this timeframe, between fall 2010 and fall 2014, there were 1,127 African American males enrolled. The enrollment variation between fall 2010 and fall 2014 ranged between 31.9 to 33.5 expected in fall 2013 when the enrollment peaked at 34.2. Program participants in this timeframe were subjects for this research.

Table 1

Urban Community College Students by Race and Gender

	FA 10		FA 11		FA 12		FA 13		FA 14	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
American Indian/Alaska Native										
Male	40	36.0%	39	39.4%	22	30.6%	21	26.9%	20	32.3%
Female	71	64.0%	60	60.6%	50	69.4%	57	73.1%	42	67.7%
Total	111	0.6%	99	0.6%	72	0.4%	78	0.5%	62	0.4%
Male	115	38.1%	152	40.6%	180	45.5%	186	44.5%	182	42.5%
Female	187	61.9%	222	59.4%	216	54.5%	232	55.5%	246	57.5%
Total	302	1.7%	374	2.1%	396	2.4%	418	2.7%	428	3.0%
African American										
Male	1,127	31.9%	1,195	32.3%	1,120	31.6%	1,134	34.2%	1,012	33.5%
Female	2,408	68.1%	2,504	67.7%	2,419	68.4%	2,186	65.8%	2,011	66.5%
Total	3,535	19.7%	3,699	20.7%	3,539	21.5%	3,320	21.2%	3,023	21.2%
Hispanic										
Male	77	43.0%	71	37.2%	66	35.9%	79	40.5%	74	32.6%
Female	102	57.0%	120	62.8%	118	64.1%	116	59.5%	153	67.4%
Total	179	0.01%	191	1.1%	184	1.1%	195	1.2%	227	1.6%
Native American/Pacific Islander										
Male	7	46.7%	11	50.0%	9	40.9%	6	50.1%	8	40.0%
Female	8	53.3%	11	50.0%	13	59.1%	6	50.0%	12	60.0%
Total	15	0.1%	22	0.1%	22	0.1%	12	0.1%	20	0.1%

White										
Male	6,076	44.7%	5,911	44.4%	5,212	43.1%	5,098	44.7%	4,485	43.9%
Female	7,531	55.3%	7,416	55.6%	6,904	57.0%	6,316	55.3%	5,727	56.1%
Total	13,607	75.9%	13,327	74.4%	12,116	73.5%	11,414	73.0%	10,212	71.8%
Two or More Races										
Male	61	35.7%	64	33.2%	56	35.2%	74	35.7%	106	41.2%
Female	110	64.3%	129	66.8%	103	64.8%	133	64.3%	151	58.8%
Total	171	1.0%	193	100.0%	159	1.0%	207	1.3%	257	1.8%

Credit Enrollment by Gender and Ethnicity for the College
Note. URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE Student Demographics

Through deliberate sampling, the population for this study included former participants and current mentors of the African American Male Scholars (AAMS) program.

Upon obtaining full IRB approval from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and site permission from Urban Community College (pseudonym), six past participants and three mentors were contacted for potential inclusion in this study. According to Creswell (2007), five subjects are sufficient for obtaining and categorizing themes and cross themes. Mentors were asked to identify past participants appropriate for this study. All participants were contacted by the researcher through email, telephone, or in personal discussions. The researcher determined if the participants qualified for the study based upon any of the following criteria: (a) a past participant of the African American Scholars Program who earned a certificate, diploma, or associates degree (b) served as a program mentor (c) between the ages of 18-65, and (d) identified as an African American male.

Upon verifying that all participants met inclusion criteria, the study was introduced. The researcher presented the purpose of the study, criteria for participation, and the risks and benefits associated with participation. Participants were informed and assured of confidentiality that their names or other identifying information would not be disclosed and that the pseudonym, Urban Community College” and African American Male Scholars (AAMS) and other identifiers would be recorded in this same manner in the dissertation as well as in future scholarly presentations or publications possibly resulting from the findings of this study. Participants were informed of data collection procedures and their right to voluntarily withdraw from the study prior to or during the interview. Participants desiring to withdrawal from the study were asked to contact the researcher by telephone, email or in person via the contact information provided in the informed consent letter and form. To reinforce the participant’s understanding of the purpose of the study,

they were encouraged to ask questions. Lastly, the Informed Consent Signature Form and letter, as well as the interview protocol, were emailed as attachments. The interview protocol was provided at this time to give participants time to reflect upon their experiences and prepare well-articulated responses. The researcher requested that the Informed Consent Form be returned by email or in person within one week to confirm participation. An email was sent to those that did not respond to gauge their interest and reiterate the opportunity. Contacting participants in this manner was in compliance of Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies regarding researcher influence and prevented allegations of coercion.

Data Collection

This study examined the mentoring experiences of the mentors and past participants of a community college African American male program focused on mentoring as an approach to increasing retention and academic success for African American males. The two research questions for this study were answered through in-depth interviewing and narrative analysis. The self-reflective nature of qualitative research put emphasis on the researcher as the interpreter of data and acknowledged the importance of language and communication in all facets of this qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2007). Using a basic interpretative qualitative method to collect data allowed the researcher to pose semi-structured questions. Two groups of participants were sought to participate in this study: current mentors in Urban Community College African American Male Scholars Program and past participants of AAMS who completed their respective programs of study. Data collection entailed a demographic survey from past participants and an hour-long audio taped interview session for mentors and past participants, any publicly available data and artifacts related to the programs impact, and/or recent AAMS activities related to mentoring.

The semi-structured interview protocol was created by the researcher to gather mentor and participant experiences and was used to facilitate interviews. Transcriptions of the interview sessions were provided to participants by email or in person for member checking and for verification of the researcher's appropriate interpretation.

Population

To ensure that subjects met the requirements for participation, purposive sampling was the appropriate approach for conducting this in-depth study (Berg, 2004). Current AAMS mentors were asked to provide the names and contact information for prospective participants. The target population for this research included six past participants of the "Urban Community College Bernard Campus" (pseudonym) African American Male Scholars initiative (AAMS) (pseudonym) and three mentors. Selecting participants through purposeful sampling allowed the investigator to intentionally select individuals based on specific characteristics. The concept of purposeful sampling purposely influences an understanding of the central phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 2008).

Participant Interviews

Qualitative research hinges on data conveyed through in-depth interviewing as an alternative to numerical data. This method utilizes meaning-based information rather than statistical data for analysis (Miles & Gilbert, 2005). According to Berg (2004), "qualitative research... refers to meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things," where the narratives from participants will provide description to derive meaning (p. 3). In order to answer research questions, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore participant program experiences and narrative analysis was used to code themes (Creswell, 2008). The semi-structured interview protocol was created by the researcher and was

used to facilitate interviews. The interview protocol was provided to participants prior to the interview to give them time to reflect upon their experiences and prepare well-articulated responses. This approach made it possible for the researcher to demonstrate sufficient interest within the participant's academic setting and also provided a means to better assess and qualify their expressed perspectives. Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted at the participants' home campus of "Urban Community College Bernard Campus" (pseudonym). Skype or Lync interviews were offered as an alternative in the instance that the researcher or participant experienced scheduling conflicts or location constraints. Prior to the start of the interview as per the informed consent process, participants were reminded that the interview was being audio recorded and were asked to complete the demographic questionnaire (Appendix A). Each was provided with a copy of the consent form for personal record keeping. Protocols were developed to gather information and record data throughout the duration of the interview (Creswell, 2008). The semi-structured interview protocol (Appendices B & C) was developed by the researcher and was utilized for interviews. This approach enabled the researcher to reorder questions, and permitted language level adjustment, endorsed participant questions and sanctioned the researcher to ethically add or delete probes (Berg, 2004). Interview questions were devised to garner insights of participant experiences, mentor- mentee interaction, institutional action, institutional commitment, institutional support, social integration, self-efficacy and the effects of President Obama's election (See page 42). The researcher created a matrix to depict how each interview question aligned with the two research questions for mentors (Appendix D) and for past student participants (Appendix E).

Expert Panel

Yin (2003) recommended that in order to refine and develop research questions, a pilot test or expert panel be conducted. An expert panel consisting of a small group of five individuals with inclusion criterion comparable to the principal study group was assembled. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to assess and improve the quality of the interview protocol and divulge researcher weakness and bias. Individuals were asked to reply to questions as though they were involved in the actual study. Participants were asked for feedback about their experience at the end of the interview and revisions were made to improve data collection. The Interview Protocol was amended and an inquiry was added to investigate the additional factors that mentees believed contributed to academic success. The researcher reflected on this experience and then adjusted interview techniques and questions where necessary. To better review, critique, and modify the interview process, interviews were audio recorded. Data from the expert panel test were only be used to inform the main study and were not included in the actual study; all data relating to that test has been destroyed.

Interview Protocol

Interview questions align with the research questions found in the Interview Question-Research Matrix (Appendix D). The interview questions were as follows:

Current AAMS Mentors Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Describe your personal educational journey from grade school to college completion.
2. What is your definition of mentoring?
3. Tell me about your history of mentoring and of being mentored, as applicable.

4. How did you become involved with AAMS mentoring at Urban Community College Bernard Campus and what are your responsibilities in helping these men achieve community college completion?
5. Describe your training or preparation as a formal mentor in the AAMS program and explain how it or other factors may have contributed to the formation of your personal mentoring style?
6. Describe the need you see in mentoring African American males in succeeding academically and in other areas.
7. Describe your personal philosophy in supporting, motivating and/or empowering AA male students.
8. Tell me about the greatest joys you experience in mentoring AA men at the community college level. The most challenging aspects?
9. Describe an ideal program at the college or university level designed to mentor AA males in completing their chosen programs of study.
10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about mentoring in general or being a mentor in the MMI program?

Past AAMS Participants Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. What are your educational goals?
2. What is your definition of mentoring?
3. How did you learn that Urban Community College had a mentoring program aimed at helping African American males achieve completion of their programs of study and what was your reaction to discovering this offering?
4. Describe any formal or informal mentoring experiences you had prior to attending Urban Community College Bernard Campus?

5. What mentoring networking activities were you involved in at AAMS and what were your perceptions about participating in these?
6. To what degree of importance was it that you had a mentor of the same race as you?
7. In what ways did your mentor help you overcome academic or personal obstacles and ultimately completion of your program of study?
8. Describe any perceived benefits or disadvantages of being part a program that focused on mentoring African American males toward program of study completion?
9. In what other ways did Urban Community College Bernard Campus demonstrate they cared that you completed your program of study?
10. What factors, besides participation in a mentoring program for African American males, do you believe contributed to your program completion?
11. How important is it to you to see other African American males succeed? Can you give examples?
12. What was the best part about participating in a mentoring initiative for African American male program of study completion? The most challenging part?
13. Describe an ideal program at the college or university level designed to mentor African American males.
14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about mentoring in general or being mentored at UCCBC?

Triangulation

Triangulation is an approach that uses three intersecting lines of action progressing toward a single concept or prospective to measure findings. Although sightings can be done with

two lines that intersect at one point, the third line permits a more accurate estimate of the unknown point or object being evaluated (Berg & Berg, 1993).

To further establish correlations, this study triangulated data by using three sources to collect information. These sources included multiple interviews, document analysis via conference and program agendas, and member checking. Interviewing multiple subjects reduced the likelihood that the evidence rendered reflected bias. This approach also utilized the photos and personal keepsakes that participants were asked to bring to the interview. Member checking was the final measure to collect and establish credibility.

Triangulation accurately reflected and strengthened participant accounts and mentoring experiences. Moreover, this method was useful for substantiating participant perspectives associated with program participation and discovering additional themes. (Creswell, 2007).

Triangulation made it possible for the researcher to utilize and make use of diverse sources of information needed to create the data needed identify and substantiate emerging themes (Creswell, 2007).

Data Analysis

It is imperative that data in qualitative research be organized systemically (Berg, 2004). Organizing data in this manner enabled the researcher to locate valid information and easily trace the results back to the interview questions for content and data analysis (Miles & Gilbert, 2005). A comprehensive analysis of recorded participant interviews were evaluated then transposed into text. Transcription provided the constructs essential to pinpointing individual statements related to participant experiences. Statements with a correlation to each code were regarded as an implication of interest in that code. The result of this process also produced sub-themes (Creswell, 2007). This information was perused and the data that was disclosed was coded then

sorted into logical categories and themes. Constructed categories were directly linked to the literature, interviews and research questions. Statements with no correlation or applicability to the research questions were deleted (Berg, 2004). Statements were clustered into themes and responses with monotonous and common characteristics were removed (Moustakas 1994). This approach enabled the researcher to synthesize the data and gain access to the information needed to create a table to distinctly evaluate the scope of participant experiences.

In order to provide accurate reporting of the chronology, the researcher was attentive to the need of participants to construct a narrative about their experiences. This enabled the researcher to recognize emerging stories and prompt participants to expand on interview questions. Additionally, the researcher utilized the Clandinin and Connelly (2000) three dimensional space approach. This methodology involved analyzing the data for the following three elements: personal and social interaction, continuity of past, present, and future experiences, and location of the situation (Creswell, 2007). Such approaches' assisted the researcher in constructing the reliability and validity of the data and to develop a more profound understanding of the data.

Reliability and Validation

Various viewpoints associated with the importance of reliability and validation in qualitative research exists. Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that the use of the terms credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, objectivity, and conformability establishes the reliability of a study. Silverman (2005) resolves that reliability in qualitative research refers to the stability of participant responses in relation to multiple codes in data sets. Richardson (2007) proposes that validation in qualitative research is a process that assesses the accuracy of findings. Eisner (1991) posited that the use of these terms provides realistic benchmarks for

assessing the credibility of research. All agree that reliability is further enhanced by the researcher's field notes, recorded interviews and transcriptions. As a rule, all four suppositions are necessary to help the researcher verify and support data obtained and feel confident about their observations, interpretations and conclusions (Creswell, 2007).

Member checking was essential to the credibility of the researcher's findings and interpretations for this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that this technique is critical for establishing credibility. Participants were required to read their transcribed interview to appraise the accuracy and credibility of their experiences. An expert panel consisting of a small group of five individuals with inclusion criterion comparable to the principle study group also contributed to the validity and reliability of findings but was not included in the actual study.

Summary

A basic interpretive approach was used to conduct this qualitative study. This study investigated the experiences of six past participants of an African American male community college mentoring program and three of their mentors. Audio-taped semi-structured interviewing was the primary data collection method. In addition, demographic information was obtained and participants were brought conference agendas, program sponsored workshop agendas, pamphlets, artifacts, and documents to validate participation in seminars and trainings. This information was used to further establish correlations needed to further strengthen the mentor-student relationship and illustrate mentor experiences. Member checking also served as an instrument to gain accurate insight. Purposive sampling allowed the investigator to intentionally select individuals based on specific characteristics to purposefully inform the study. The aforementioned strategies supported the researcher's goal of discovering the activities that created the experiences essential to assisting program participants reach their academic goals.

CHAPTER 4

DATA AND ANALYSIS

The results of Chapter Four are comprised of nine interviews conducted by six past participants and three mentors of an urban community college mentoring initiative for African American males. Urban Community College-Bernard Campus [pseudonym] was selected based on its commitment to fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion. Urban Community College (UCC) is an important gateway in the area to higher education for African American males and other career venues. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of current African American community college mentors and past participants in an African American male community college mentoring initiative related to the completion of academic programs.

The first section of this chapter will review the demographic data of past program participants. Participant ages, prior attendance at a four year college or university, current enrollment at a college or university, and parental college attendance and graduation were examined.

The second section of this chapter examines the themes that emerged as a result of mentor interviews. The analysis began by exploring their educational journeys from kindergarten through college. They were asked to provide personal definitions of mentoring and their history of mentoring and how they became involved in the initiative. They were also asked to discuss mentor training and responsibilities. An inquiry into their personal philosophies in providing support and motivation was also solicited. The joys and challenges of mentoring was also explored as well as recommendations for program improvement. This analysis relates to the first research question presented in this study; What are the perceptions of current mentors of a

community college African American mentoring initiative related to the impact mentoring had on helping past program participants achieve program completion?

The third section of this chapter relates to the second research question and examined the experiences of past participants of a community college completion initiative for African American male community college students: What are the perceptions of past participants in a community college African American mentoring initiative related to their impact on helping students achieve program completion?

Participant Descriptions

The following information describes the participants in this study. In order to protect their anonymity, this information is presented in a general sense.

Jason [pseudonym] is a former National Football League (NFL) player. He was hired by the college to control the African American males who appeared to be loitering the hallways. He also serves in an administrative role and is responsible for student retention. He has a strong commitment to students and the community college mission. He has been employed by the college for fifteen years.

Juan [pseudonym] provides students with academic guidance and is also a Psychotherapist. He is currently enrolled in a doctoral program. He has been employed by the college for seven years.

Cara [pseudonym] is the only African American female mentor in this program. Due to the shortage of Black male administrative staff at UCC's Bernard Campus, Cara was appointed to this undertaking by senior administrators. She serves in an administrative role and is an adjunct faculty member. She is currently enrolled in a doctoral program and plans to open her own counseling business. She has been employed by the college for nine years.

Torrence [pseudonym] did not attend college after high school and was employed in the business world. As a result of the downturn of the economy several years ago, he was laid off. This life altering event prompted his interest in pursuing a college degree.

Denzel [pseudonym] was homeschooled and is an aspiring film producer. He enrolled at the four year university after graduation and is currently in a master's degree program. He is currently serving as mentor for an afterschool program.

Tre [pseudonym] was an engineering major at a four-year institution prior to attending Urban Community College (UCC). He did not fare well academically and decided to enroll in community college. After earning his degree from UCC he applied to and was readmitted to the university from which he transferred.

Ricky [pseudonym] is a former gang member who realized that he had the acumen to earn a college degree while incarcerated.

Herbie [pseudonym] is a musical prodigy. He is a music major and is currently enrolled in a dual bachelor's and master's degree program at a four year university.

Sean [pseudonym] was employed fulltime and was a fulltime student while attending UCC. He was challenged with maintaining his grades and caring for his elderly grandfather during his studies. He believes that the power of prayer and gratitude gave him the strength that he needed to achieve success.

Demographic Analysis

Six past participants and three mentors of the Urban Community College-Bernard Campus AAMS initiative participated in this study. Three participants were in the 18-24 age range, with the remaining three participants in one of the remaining age ranges (See Figure1).

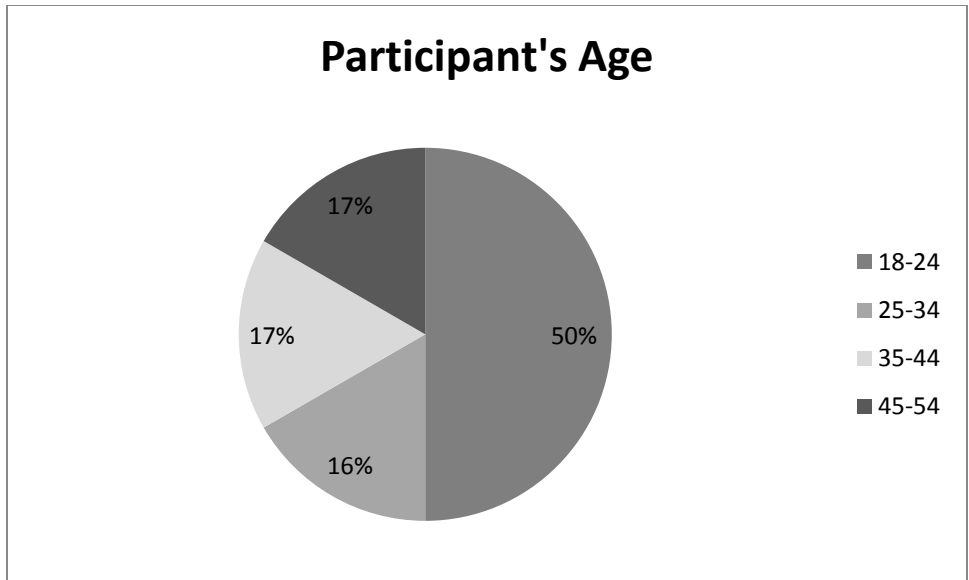


Figure 1. Participants' ages.

Two of the past participants attended a college or university prior to enrolling at UCC while four of the past participants had not attended an institution of higher learner prior to attendance (See Figure2).

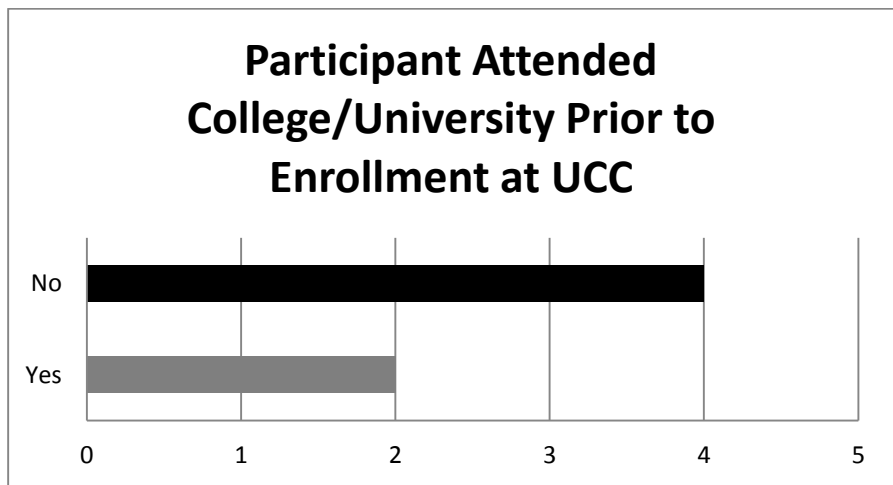


Figure 2. Participants attended college or university prior to enrollment at Urban Community College.

Three of the past participants are currently enrolled in a four year institution. One participant is employed whereas the remaining two have returned to UCC to earn an additional certificate and plan to pursue a bachelor degree. Participants majored in business, education, engineering, film, music, and psychology (See Figure 3).

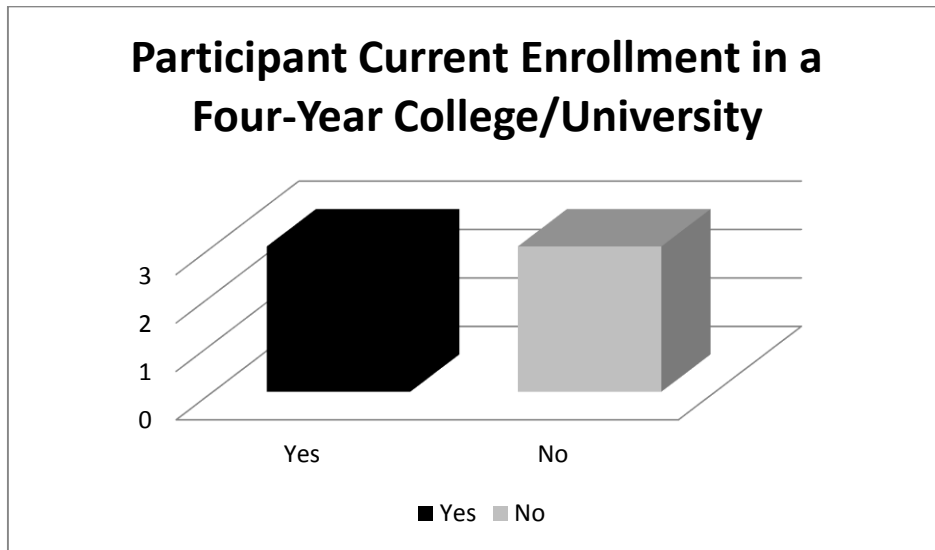


Figure 3. Participants' current enrollment in a four year college or university.

Three participants report that neither parent attended college whereas one participant indicated that their mother attended college while another indicated that their father attended and a different participant did not respond (See Figure 4).

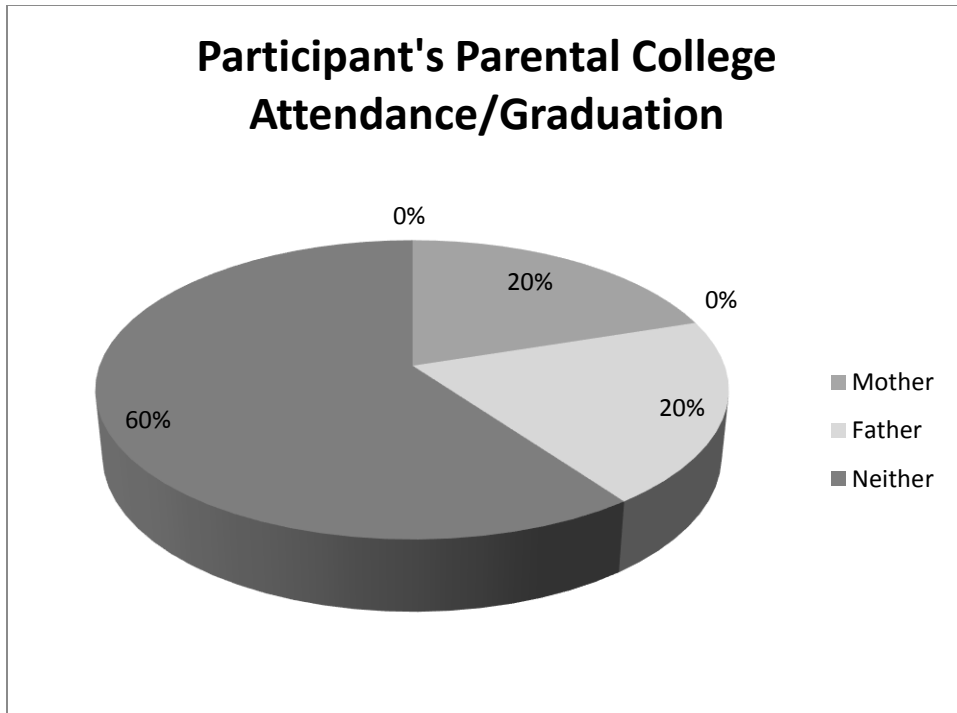


Figure 4. Participants' parental college attendance or graduation.

All interviews were conducted on the UCC campus. Interview time ranged between 45 minutes to one hour in length. Participants in both groups appeared to be open, honest, and amendable to sharing their experiences. Moreover, participants were enthusiastic about sharing their stories with current participants and eager to assist with program recruitment activities.

Each interview was audio recorded in its entirety. Both the mentors and participants shared artifacts such as conference agendas, booklets, tee-shirts and certificates of participation. Participants considered that the items that were presented contributed to the overall mentor experience. Furthermore, both measurements will be divulged in subsequent sections of this dissertation.

Emergent Themes

Subsequent sections will illustrate the themes that emerged through interviews with all nine participants included in this study. This examination will also include the artifacts that enriched their experiences as a result of program participation.

To discover experiences, mentor interviews were analyzed first. Creswell (2007) contended that the viewpoint of Critical Race Theory (CRT) involved translating the dialogue of individuals who at one time limitations and regulations had placed upon them by race, class, and gender. Their viewpoints provided a means for exploring and interpreting the meaning of the historical problems responsible for their social struggles and laid the foundation for empowering themselves and others through mentoring.

This section following will examine emergent themes of program mentors. The section includes mentors' grade school occurrences of corporal punishment by school authorities, not being encouraged to attend college by school officials, feelings of isolation, having to put forth an extra effort to be understood, and the absence of Black teachers.

Mentor Experiences of Grade School Racism

Mentor experiences of racism were examined in this study. Both male mentors acknowledged that they experienced racism from grade school through high school. Jason [pseudonym] characterized his early encounters as being disruptive to his self-esteem in this manner.

In grade school, especially in 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades there were no Black teachers.

There was no one I felt comfortable with especially on the male side and as a result I think my self-esteem was disrupted. I didn't have anyone to tell me that I could go on and motivate me to the next level so to speak. A lot of times, the

white female teachers were saying you are not able to do certain things. They were trying to get me from elementary going into grade school to say 8th grade; they were trying to motivate me to go to the service. I can't do this, you can't do this, it's going to be too much trouble for you, so your self-esteem and all of a sudden you take a back seat to everybody else wondering what is going on.

Jason's account correlates with Woods (2010) study that investigated the common classroom scenario, White female teachers and Black male students. The study contends that African American males in this situation internalize negative stereotypes concerning their potential. The effects of this relationship possibly hindered Jason's academic performance and affected his self-esteem. The lack of encouragement from White female elementary teachers is the obstacle that Anderson (2006) maintains as the one of the barriers that thwarted Jason's attempts to become academically confident. Juan recalled a time in third grade, "My teacher grabbed my arm and started shaking me. I jumped up on the chair and punched her in the face. I had to go to the principal's office and to my surprise he was Black." Ingrassia, 1993; Lapoint, 1992; Mancus, 1992 as cited in Taylor, 2003, suggested that the presence of Black males in the classroom is beneficial. The presence of a Black male school official evoked positivity and encouraged better academic performance for Juan. "I remember him putting his hand out to shake mine. His hand covered my entire hand and it was at that moment he told me that I cannot act that way and that I was supposed to be representing my mother." According to Taylor (2003), when students of color are afforded this opportunity, they are more apt to more academically sound.

Cara [pseudonym], the only African American female and mentor in this study, admitted that she always felt the need to prove herself.

It was an interesting journey in that I felt that I needed to take extra efforts to be understood. While the environment was not uncomfortable it strengthened my ability to be a chameleon in any situation that I found myself in. Essentially that was the result of it. My educational journey began in the Catholic school system. I attended Catholic school from kindergarten through graduation.

Both Juan and Jason stated that school officials encouraged them to join the military, a recommendation that neither found amenable. As a result of early experiences, Juan attended a Historically Black College (HBCU) in Ohio whereas Jason found himself through sports and was presented with an athletic scholarship at a college also located in Ohio. Cara's experiences of school system racism prompted her to attend a HBCU in the South. She experienced culture shock. She was often told that she talked and acted White. She had difficulty adapting to the culture and eventually transferred to a Catholic college in the North.

As evidenced in this analysis, racism was evident from the onset of each mentors educational journey. Understanding racial differences from kindergarten through high school heightened their awareness of educational racial inequalities. Their experiences with racism were detrimental to the self-esteem and motivation of the men who would become mentors. The female mentor described her coping mechanism as behaving like a chameleon; she developed the ability to adapt to environments and situations regardless of how uncomfortable they were.

Mentor Definition of Mentoring

Also examined in this study was the mentor's definition of mentoring and being mentored. All individuals believed that a mentor should be someone who holds a position at a level that the mentee is striving to achieve educationally or professionally. One mentor believed

that mentoring is not a relationship that has been forced upon participants, but rather, it should actively involve each member of the relationship. Another was certain that a mentor presents oneself as a role model whereas yet another believed that there are two types of mentors, academic and personal. Juan [pseudonym] stated:

A personal mentor covers all aspects of your life. They are there to encourage you, motivate you, and push you to guide you to redirect you. I believe they should serve a specific world. These are the people I have given the right to correct me, and literally have given them the right to correct me whatever in my life that they see a need for improvement. I'm telling them to tell me what it is. Don't stroke my ego. Don't tell me I'm good. Tell me what I'm doing wrong and incorrect.

Juan [pseudonym] also indicated that he believed that individuals should involve three types of mentors in their lives. Also, he mentioned that:

A mentor who is pouring into us and then a colleague who is equal who you can bounce ideas off of, I'm learning from this person because we are equals and then me also having a mentor and being a mentee also.

Cara's [pseudonym] perspective on the definition of mentoring was derived from her lifelong involvement in ministry and working with community service agencies.

Mentoring from the mentor's perspective is to be able to show oneself as a role model, a guide to individuals that may be seeking to achieve the level of success that you now possess. Or to just be an example of positive outcomes that can occur in somebody's life even when they maybe in challenging situations. From the mentee perspective if they can identify from someone who can help them to

be the best version of themselves. That is always the best and positive experience for them.

Cara also discussed how growing up with a father who is a pastor shaped her worldview of serving others. Her life had been one of reaching out to the less fortunate. She serves as the youth minister at her church and enjoys working with teens to help them set life goals and understand that how having faith can carry them through. Cara did not have a mentor in her life until she transferred to a Catholic college in the north. An African American college admissions counselor served as her mentor and they still maintain a close relationship.

Jason [pseudonym], a retired professional football player believes that a mentor is someone with whom you can develop a relationship.

I think mentoring is a sounding board it's a person that is a little older, a good listener. Someone that you can develop a relationship with long term, it's not just a relationship that is forced upon you, you actually pick a mentor because it is long term and you go back and forth. You can bounce things off of that person.

Jason expressed his appreciation of having met his mentor while playing high school sports.

Pete was a big help in mentoring and getting me to be recruited by a few big colleges. As a matter of fact, it came down to two big universities. Pete was a guy that grew up poor; he didn't have a lot of money. He grew up in the community that I did. He was a white Italian American; he didn't have it easy, because he had to work and go to school at the same time. He was forced to work at a high school in the city in 1948.

Jason also indicated that his mentor Pete attended a predominately Black high school. He believed that Pete understood his social struggles. Pete was also the first person that he went to

help him when faced with making a decision about playing professional football. Because Jason's father passed away when he was younger, Pete not only served as his mentor but as a father figure as well.

Based on mentor responses, it is evident that mentoring is a two-way relationship that supports and encourages individuals of a lesser age during their trajectory towards personal, academic, or career goals. This relationship requires that the mentor serve this role earnestly while being mindful of the fact that helping the mentee reach their potential is the main objective of this relationship. Mentor-mentee relationships can occur by happenstance or through formal organizations. These relationships have a potential for lasting a lifetime.

Mentor Responsibilities

Examining the circumstances surrounding how mentors became involved in the initiative and their responsibilities were also examined in this study. Juan [pseudonym] indicated that his involvement with the initiative was by default. He further recognized that the number of African American males employed in administrative positions at colleges are scarce.

I'm one of the few at this college that fit that description as an African American professional at this college. This is one of the ways I got in partially because of what I have done, but I think primarily because there is not a huge pool. There's not a lot of us here at UCC. One of my mentors approached me and asked me to participate. It wasn't even a question of whether I was doing it or not, he asked so I'm doing it.

Juan also indicated his primary responsibility to participants is to provide them with educational opportunities, networking opportunities, opportunities to teach leadership, anger management and opportunities to encourage them get involved in the community. He also denoted that:

I'm in a unique situation, because I'm a counselor and one of my roles here is to provide personal counseling to them and transfer counseling. This is one of the things we have been able to do is role in with my position of a counselor.

Cara [pseudonym] indicated that she was part of the steering committee for UCC and was appointed to the role of mentor.

We were essentially charged with building community within the African American male student population. We were instructed to establish a core group of students and build camaraderie among them and serve as a support system. We were to make them aware of all of the resources that are available here at the college and just be identified as the people they can come to if they are experiencing difficulties so that we could at least point them in the right direction to get on track with whatever they are experiencing.

Jason was involved in mentoring prior to serving at UCC. He received formal training and was well-versed in the positive and negative challenges that mentoring encompasses.

I came here to UCC in 2002. The reason they hired me was not as a support specialist. But they hired me to be more of a security guard. Back then they had benches on each side and a lot of our black male students from surrounding communities. The faculty, administrators and staff were afraid of them. Because of the language, not that they were addressing it to them, they had to walk through, and it intimidated them. There was a lot of negativity, faculty saying that's what they were here for to intimidate them. Again it was a black versus white, not that I'm that type of person, the white administrators, faculty and staff looked at it as a negative. So they brought me in based on my size. Every time there was an issue or problem, they wanted me to come up here and police the

students, but I took another approach. I just talked to the students. All of a sudden the students started relating to me, if they had an issue with any kind of problem, they would call me.

Jason further contended that he was perceived by students to be a support system and sounding board. He believes that communication and building trust are the keys to creating successful mentor-mentee relationships and that leading by example is an excellent way to demonstrate this. “As your mentor, I’m talking to you and planning strategies with you.”

This analysis revealed that serving as a mentor occurs sometimes by happenstance. The analysis also reinforced the fact that the social behavior of Black males in academia has historically and continues to be misunderstood by other races. The scarcity of African American males serving in administrative positions in Predominately White Institutions (PWI) in higher education is worrisome and that completion initiatives are needed. The need for mentors to hold double duty in the work place is not regarded as extra work by those who are wholeheartedly serving to change the academic plight and economic future of African American males.

Mentor Training

Mentors revealed that there was no formal training to serve as mentor. They were contacted by email and asked to function in this capacity. Juan stated that:

There really wasn’t any formal training, because the program was relatively new, and basically, I believe they were trying to find people who were willing to do it and then we played off of each other’s experiences to try to create the program.

Also, Cara stated that:

There wasn't any formal training or preparation. I guess it just happened on the strength of our character in terms of being able to be there and assist the students with whatever their needs were.

Based on life experience and prior involvement in mentoring, Jason developed his own mentoring style.

There was no formal training for this program. I will be honest with you; I did that on my own. This is very natural to me. This is not work for me; it's easy. I'm in a comfort zone when I'm with the young guys and you see me in the hallway, I was exposed to a mentoring programs in the area and worked for a youth serving agency. I incorporated those trainings into what I do here. I've worked with young students at risk and actually served as a dorm monitor before I became a full-time Student Success Coach here at UCC. Mentoring One-on-One, What Every Mentor Should Know, Mentoring Two, Establishing Boundaries, are the programs that I have participated in throughout the years. Taking those courses helped me develop me as a mentor.

This data revealed that although it is beneficial to receive formal mentor training it is possible to effectively serve in this capacity without training. It appears that in establishments where diversity amongst personnel is limited, those individuals are called to duty and expected to serve unconditionally.

There is a Need for African American Male Mentor Initiatives

The value of academic completion initiatives for African American male community college students was indicated in mentor responses. Juan acknowledged that he had read several articles pertaining to this subject and pronounced that:

The need is great; statistics across the country verify that African American males are the least likely to graduate college. Their percentages are the lowest so their need exceeds anyone else's need. They are struggling above and beyond academically, and it is imperative for them to have additional support outside of the classroom; just personal encouragement.

Cara contended that this population of students needs to be in an environment where they are understood and not be subjected to preconceived notions of whom college personnel think they may be. She stated:

I think there is a deficiency in the people who are supposed to meet their needs because they let their own bias stand in the way of being able to be objective about assisting them. They have a lack of education on the part of those giving it, lack of relationship because a lot of times if I have not had experience with you then I can only unfortunately make an assessment of who you are sometimes based on the images and the things that are fed to me and sometimes that is the downfall or shortcoming of why biases are formed. If you have had one negative experience you like to react that way to everybody. I think it's just as important to strengthen a caring environment that is extended to everybody versus a select few or who you are comfortable with. We cannot show favoritism is what I'm getting at.

Jason's viewpoint for mentoring addressed the lack of confidence that African American males have in the educational setting.

Mentoring is needed from the standpoint of again like myself, we get within ourselves, we get in this box, were afraid to come out, to ask questions. I

think it's self-esteem as it relates to society and what was told to us over time and a lot of people and even other African Americans.

This analysis strengthened the idea that mentoring initiatives are an important factor and needed influence for motivating African American males to move towards successful completion.

Empowerment

“No excuses,” is Juan’s philosophy about supporting, motivating and empowering students.

We can always find excuses, when you want to do something you will find a way to find an excuse; so my mindset is I don’t want to hear an excuse, we need to find a way. I tell them there is always someone, somewhere that is facing the same thing. The one thing they need to focus on is a comeback instead of issues I just don’t accept them.

Cara believed that only way to motivate African American males is to meet them where they are and build a rapport that will better enable them to understand that, “I serve as a resource; a valuable resource that they can tap into.” She further emphasized that absentee fathers is one reason why she believes that some males lack the motivation to pursue a college degree.

Empower them by giving them achievable tasks because once somebody experiences a sense of accomplishment, it's a building block of wanting to reach for more.

Jason’s assessment is that it is essential that students are offered several activities to maintain their enthusiasm and motivation. In his interview, he expressed that “communication is the key that unlocks and instills the motivation needed to achieve graduation

Mentors recognized the importance of not allowing students to make excuses, the benefits of meeting students where they are, the importance of building and maintaining rapport to create trust and the importance of effective communication as the keys they used to support, motivate and empower program participants. They credit the enforcement of the aforementioned dynamics as the motivation that lead to successful completion of the participants in this study.

The Joy and Challenges of Being a Mentor

Juan indicated that witnessing participants achieve completion and knowing that he was instrumental in their success is where he finds joy.

The greatest joy is watching the students walk across that stage. The fact that I was able to contribute a small portion and add to their success is a great joy of mine; the fact that something they have learned with us will carry with them and enable them share their experiences with other people that is my greatest joy.

When asked to share the challenges serving in this capacity Juan stated:

The most challenging aspects are a couple parts, the first one is getting the student at a place where they start taking their education really seriously, and taking themselves more seriously and that they believe in themselves.

He further stressed that he was also confronted with the reality where some participants had experienced failure after failure and disappointment, he found it difficult convincing them that failure is was not a permanent setback.

Cara's satisfaction is comparable to Juan's. The challenge that Cara expressed is there are not enough Black administrative staff serving as mentors. She stated that:

Being able to see them graduate, that is the greatest joy to know that you played a special part of them finishing what they set out to accomplish when they came

here. You can believe in it all you want but there are is only so much, you as one person can do. We need the help of other individuals to make it work so sometimes that can be challenging.

Jason's joy matches both Juan and Cara's experiences concerning the graduation ceremony.

Seeing their success, and I can't judge everybody the same, everybody going to grow differently but I think one of the best things for me to see is some of the young men that you had to take by the hand and take across the street so to speak and helping these African American men realize they can take the initiative to go on to bigger and better things. Then they are coming back and thanking me for telling them what they needed to do. We created collaboration and how this happened I'm not sure but we have a relationship with a local four year university. That school now has peer mentors that are the four year school is coming back and talking to our young men here to form a bridge.

Both Jason and Cara expressed comparable institutional drawbacks. Both are of the volition that additional mentors are needed to ensure better program experiences and outcomes. Jason experienced verbal negativity from UCC employees.

I have had some negative feedback from UCC about why I had seven students go to a local university's engineering program. They asked me why I am doing that. I told them that it's because the students have the grades and were interested in pursuing engineering.

An additional challenge for Jason has been getting non-participating students, the ones that would benefit greatly from participation, to involve themselves in the program.

Ideal Program Design

Juan recommended pairing participants with mentors of the same race who are in similar careers outside of the college. He believed that this would be ideal, stating that “Students would benefit by having access to people who have achieved where they are aspiring to be. These individuals experienced the same push, motivation, setbacks and disappointment.” He further believed that the program should serve as respite from the violence that they are faced with daily.

Cara recommended that adding a peer mentoring component to the mentoring program would be ideal. She firmly believes that because peers can relate to one another, they have the capacity “to give each other that extra nudge or be able to say things to each other that someone in an administrative type position may not be able to get away with. I think that positive peer pressure would be ideal. Additionally, she is certain that building relationships would provide participants with sense of wellbeing.

Similar to what Juan stated, Jason indicated:

I would have more leaders of color in the community to come back and tell their story. I would have someone from the bank, for financial literacy, I would go to each and every area and bring somebody in to talk to the students. So I would have more prominent African American males that have gone through the struggles and know what it is like. I wouldn't bring them wearing suits. I don't feel you need to be in a suit to be dressed for success, that's not what it's all about. I want them to come in casual attire, no flash, I don't feel it is needed and not the idea I want to convey. I don't want the students to feel intimidated.

Juan revealed the African American Male Scholars Program (AAMS) was awarded a \$50,000.00 grant to continue the program at Urban Community College (UCC). He believes that

this endowment will help with program expansion. He divulged that the college offered a similar program in prior years that was not as successful as the current one.

I'm a firm believer that once the male catches the vision and gets an understanding of what he can achieve that will usher in African Americans as a nation to move forward progressively. It could evidently change the mindset of people's beliefs about us and the way they treat us. It changes the culture and mindset and is a major movement that can occur.

Cara believed that the program demonstrated encouragement for participants, addressing that "It is a great opportunity for them to be able to see people like them doing positive things because often time's people don't get to see those images and have those experiences."

Jason advocated for collaborating with African American fraternities to further strengthen program goals. He is met daily with the challenge of not having enough quality time with each participant. He suggested establishing a solid collaboration with the local chapter of 100 Black Men. (100 Black men is an organization that provides mentoring to at-risk African American youth.)

Mentor Similarities in Upbringing

As a result of analysis, five similarities related to childhood and educational experiences emerged. First, all mentors were raised in single parent households. Two of the mentors were raised by their mothers while one was raised by the father and grandmother. All of their parents strongly influenced them to earn a degree. Secondly, the two males in this study were not encouraged to attend college. Instead, teachers and counselors impressed upon them that joining the military was their only hope. Thirdly, both males were not encouraged academically from kindergarten through high school, whereas the female mentor who attended private Catholic

school was. Fourthly, one Black male mentor reported being paddled for infractions similar to his White classmates for which they were not punished. Though not related to this study, this theme is of significant importance: All mentors shared that having faith in a higher power helped them achieve graduation.

The third section of this chapter investigated the second research question by delving into the experiences of six past participants of a community college completion initiative for African American male community college students.

Mentee Educational Goals

First generation college student Torrence [pseudonym], the only non-traditional student in terms of age included in this study, earned an associate's degree in psychology and a certificate in drug and alcohol counseling. Participating in the AAMS program inspired Torrence to pursue a bachelor's degree in psychology. "I plan to also earn a master's degree and believe that I can earn my doctorate." Herbie [pseudonym], has earned a reputation with local jazz greats and has been called upon often to display his musical gift. With enthusiasm and excitement, Herbie stated, "I heard about a PhD program in music composition at the university I attend so that is where I intend to get my PhD."

Ricky [pseudonym], a star athlete and aspiring entrepreneur and Tre [pseudonym], a single father and small business owner, earned their associate's degrees in business and are now pursuing their bachelor's degrees in business. Both plan to attend graduate school in the future. Film major Denzel [pseudonym] served as volunteer at a non-profit television station while in high school. This experience heightened his interest in the film industry. His ultimate academic goal is to also earn a doctorate.

I will suffice with a master's degree because in the film industry it is the work that you put in and the time you put in, not so much about school but actually in the work field. Having a PhD would enable me to go back and teach what I know because of working in the field.

Sean [pseudonym] attended a four year college prior to attending UCC. He was not able to afford the high out of state tuition and realized that attending community college was the best financial option. He is currently pursuing a four year degree in electrical engineering. Half of participants in this study have set the long term goal of earning a doctorate in their respective fields, whereas the other three have set their sights on obtaining a position within their major fields.

Mentee Definition of Mentoring

Torrence describes himself as someone who did not fully understand the importance of academic or personal mentoring until he became involved in the AAMS program.

Mentoring means someone that has already acquired wisdom on a certain subject and tries to bring up somebody who is younger and doesn't have as much experience in that field to acquire the same goals as they have.

Beyond participating in Boy Scouts from time to time as a youngster, Torrence had not been exposed to a male leadership program.

Herbie believed that, "It's very important to have a mentor that experienced some of the things you will experience and should be in the same field that you are in." His number one mentor is his father. Additional mentors have come from the church and in the music field. He also believes that, "A mentor is someone who can help guide you along the path and help you look out for your mental health."

Like Herbie, Denzel hailed his father as his first mentor and believed in the importance of being mentored in the industry in which you are interested.

As I mentioned before, my father was like an informal mentor to me being that he helped me to understand the business side of my goals and to understand the academic side of my goals. Other than that I would say Dr. James Johns [pseudonym], kind of an informal and a formal mentor in the form of music and also informally in life. Ward Alexandrian [pseudonym], another jazz musician who would use music as a form of mentorship, Mike Alex [pseudonym] a great musician will always be endearing to me. Dr. Chaz [pseudonym] was an amazing man. Before I came to UCC, I had a conversation with him. I was telling him my goals and that I wanted to work in the industry but I have to get an education for it to show that I am educated in the field and he gave me the best piece of mentor advice that I live for this day. He said always work while you are in school, work outside build the experience outside. Don't wait for one or the other and so that always trained my mind to you can do two tasks to prepare for the ultimate goal. So being that I do music I can be working on the album while working on the song. I don't have to get all of the songs then put it all together. That changed my academic life, because I would have thought that I had to go straight through college and then try to get the experience. But given that he gave me that advice I have been able to go to university and have years of experience prior to that helped me inside and outside of the classroom in terms of internships.

Ricky's believed a mentor to be someone who has the skills to help others meet their goals. He was not aware that he had been informally introduced to mentoring prior to participating in the program.

I didn't realize that I had been mentored before coming to college. Before attending UCC, a man who I now realize was my mentor, helped put me on a different road. It was religious; I met him when I was young. His name is Dr. Harper [pseudonym] and I keep in touch with him every now and then. I was very down and out and he wanted me to go with him to a mosque. I was involved in bad things and my life wasn't right. He showed me a different way of life because where I was I didn't see anybody that was successful at life. He showed me a different way.

Tre stated that, "I think that mentoring is definitely being able to give back something to someone who needs encouragement. To reach down and give back, I believe it is a pull up. Also you want to get them to the level that you are and away from where you were previously. He regards working as a tutor at a Sci-Tech camp as serving in a mentoring capacity and was pleased with the fact that he was tutoring Black students.

Sean agreed with Torrence, Herbie, Denzel, Ricky and Tre that having a mentor in your field of interest is important. He further believed that they should "be willing to help you, to guide you and to help with school and personal life as well. If you don't have a father figure, a male mentor can be a father figure to you."

All six participants in this study express the importance of having a mentor with similar life experiences and the ability to encourage and motivate them towards reaching their personal and academic goals. Two of the participants credit their father with being their first mentor

whereas one mentioned that a male figure can fulfill the role of father. Formal organizations like scouting and summer science camps can also serve as mentoring programs.

Program Recruitment

Learning about UCC's mentoring program further strengthened their determination to reach completion. Torrence learned of program in the midst of tribulation.

I was approached by several people who were administrators in the program and they asked me if I was interested in joining. Actually to be completely honest, I had come across a little problem with the administrative staff and they felt that I would be a good participant in the program. That's how I actually found out about it. I was surprised that this program existed, I guess if it wasn't for the transgression that I was suffering that I might not ever have found out about it.

By transgression, I believe as a Black male student trying to acquire a higher level of education, there were several times I believed I was under attack by administration. It seemed they were trying to conform me and bend me to their will, and since I'm not a 19 or 20 year old young man and that I'm 54 years old and I've been to a few rodeos before in my life and I wasn't ready to yield, and at times, I was used as to be made an example of or tried to be taught a lesson.

Disciplinary actions that really didn't have anything to do with academics really.

As indicated, Torrence's exposure and introduction to the program was not of his own volition. Program administrators were able to glean that he was experiencing difficulty and believed that he would benefit greatly from program offerings whereas traditional aged college students Herbie, Denzel, and Tre learned about the program through Jason. Tre stated:

My mentor was pretty much recruiting in the hallways and pulled me to the side and was telling me about the program and at first I was like sure I'll go with it but I'm definitely glad I did. I was definitely interested in it especially since it was geared towards minorities and I'm definitely about helping my peers so I was really on board with it so actually when we got more into it and when we went on trips I definitely saw the potential it had.

Denzel was a student at UCC prior to the program's inception.

I remember coming to UCC my first year and one of the things I noticed was that there were so many wayward African American students. I would come into school and you would see students that would be in the cafeteria they would be skipping classes and they weren't really doing anything but they were being so loud. Now I come back to UCC and now students are in their classrooms because they have a mentor that is checking on them, and talking to them. Some of the guys see me now and tell me that they want to go to a four year college. I tell them that if they stick to their guns and stay on the path of academics they can actually look forward to attending a four year college too. It was really time for me to move on and I wish that could have played a bigger part to help my fellow Black males get to that next step, because I see some of those students now and I ask did you finish and they say no, I didn't end up of finishing. It's sad to me that they just needed that little more guidance to push.

Participants Herbie and Ricky heard about the program through a classmate. Ricky stated that:

My friend wanted to introduce me to Jason, but I ran into him and noticed that he was always present. I found out that he was a success coach so I wanted to have

him in my corner. I felt that I wanted to involve myself with the program because it could lead me into a good direction and pointed me in directions where I would benefit from someone's help. He supported me throughout the entire program.

Sean started community college and was having difficulty. He was nervous and unsure of what to do. He was sure that he needed and wanted to be in college.

My mentor approached me in the hallways, he said, 'hey young man', he was very down to earth, and at first I was nervous going to him and then we had a relationship where I started going to him every day asking him for guidance whether it was with school or my class or tutoring he directed me to the right people. I was very surprised about the program because I needed guidance at the school. We needed to have African males to go somewhere they feel comfortable and of their own race that they can go to and talk about the issues they have in the classroom, at school or outside of school and also to have a leader that is over us that is overage that understands where we are coming from.

Herbie stated that, "he had not witnessed diversity focused programs at UCC. I knew that the program would lead me into a good direction." According to Tinto (1993), African American male mentor programs are an effective way to increase retention and help reduce the difficulties they experience as they seek to adjust to the learning environment.

Three of the six participants in this study were recruited by Jason. Two learned of the program via their classmates and one participant was referred by administration. In the end, they all attribute the experiences and support that they received as a result of participation for helping them achieve completion.

Guidance, prior knowledge and life experiences was the prevailing response to this inquiry. Participant responses align with both Hall (2015) and Block et al (1998) assertions that mentoring is a two-way relationship built on trust where wisdom and guidance are imparted to someone younger with the goal of providing the support and guidance needed to achieve a goal. Additionally, their explanations correlate with Sorrentino's (2006) advice associated to the importance of the development of meaningful relationships and activities that engage mentees based in empirically supported strategies. In any case, LaVant et al (1997) asserted that mentoring initiatives are an effective support to enable participants overcome barriers and achieve success.

Student Activities

Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory contends that when an individual is exposed to an environment intended to support program outcomes, these activities have the potential to assist students acquire the confidence needed to obtain their goals. Mentees attended conferences held at four year institutions in California, Ohio and Pennsylvania. They were also taken on college tours to state colleges and universities and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU). They also attended workshops to prepare them for future social activities. At the end of each program year, a banquet was held to celebrate graduates and to encourage others.

Herbie expressed that, "The initiative helped me connect to other Black males who were doing the same things. Being around other individuals aiming for the same goal helped to encourage you to push forward and understand how important it is that you have goals." Denzel was pleased with an opportunity to meet professionals prior to graduation. "It is a great blessing because a lot of these opportunities you don't get until after you graduate. These programs and

these groups give you the opportunity to build confidence Ricky stated that, “I felt like part of the community when I sat with Jason at the end of the year banquet.” Tre articulated, “Besides the trips there are a lot of local things we do at UCC. I like the guest speakers or a trip to a company to see and experience things like that. “Networking with African American males attending four year institutions proved to be a positive experience for Sean. He stated that, “It was very powerful and opened my eyes to see where everyone was coming from. I needed the positivity not the negativity.” Sorrentino (2006) contends that the benefit active engagement contributes to academic success.

Networking

The importance of networking was apparent to Torrence. He was called upon to address participants during an African American Male Scholars (AAMS) Summit and again at UCC’s end of the year recognition AAMS banquet.

Much to my surprise I was approached by my mentor and asked to speak on two occasions. This experience let me know how much I have grown as a person and a student. When I was younger and unsure about the direction of my life, I would have never dreamed that I would be asked to do something like this.

Torrence also stated that attending college visits to several colleges and universities in the area motivated him to continue his education.

Herbie realized the importance of socializing with Black males on the same academic track as him. When he was asked about the activities that he was involved with he was eager to respond.

The initiatives really helped you to see and connect other Black males who were doing the same things. That is a really important thing especially

with being an African American male. Being around other individuals who are aiming at the same goal helped to encourage me and push me forward. I understand how important it is that you have that you have goals. I was part of the etiquette dining workshop during Career Week. We attended luncheons and we went to a summit. The guys helped me use the right utensils at dinner time and I appreciated that. I went to the summit twice and all of these different guys from all over the United States flew in or drove. All those different individuals were aiming for the same thing and it was incredible. It was awe inspiring it was very encouraging to see that because previously the diversity level at UCC there wasn't a whole lot of diversity and just being able to see how many people that are just like you who want the same thing, who want a better life and are willing to strive and work hard to get that is and awesome thing.

Denzel selected the program from the ninth annual Black Male Summit as the artifact to best represent his appreciation for being exposed to the impediments that face Black males and learning about how others have succeeded. This summit was the second summit that mentees attended.

The Black Male Summit gave me the opportunity to meet famous Black men and professionals. It was a good opportunity to meet people outside of UCC. It was a great blessing because a lot of these opportunities you don't get until after you graduate. You don't learn about networking until after you graduate, being that you can be in a program and you actually

have people that want to meet you. In the networking side of going to meet someone and being nervous, you can eliminate that because these people actually want to come and meet you and shake your hand and say wow I hear you are part of the program. So I think that is a great experience, I think it is wonderful, I think it is really, really wonderful as it helps in terms of being African American and a lot of times I feel that in the African American community we have a saying 'fake it until you make it.' That is very nerve wracking because how do you pretend you have been somewhere when you haven't? But these programs and these groups you have the opportunity to build confidence as a young African American male professional student to walk up to someone and say 'hi' my name is such and such, I'm a student in this, my grade point average is this, so they see that confidence and they say I want that guy.

Denzel also stated that participating in the program helped him a lot with his shyness. Prior to the program he was unsure about how to approach strangers or begin conversations. He attributes his father and Jason for helping him overcome this obstacle and helping him build the confidence needed for life and career success.

According to Ricky, he stated:

I got involved in the program late, but every day I used to go and talk to Jason, he was an inspiration. Before developing a relationship with him, I would just do my work and go home, I wasn't involved in anything. He helped me realize that I was smart and that based on my life experiences, that I had a lot to share with

Black males that are experiencing the same things that I had I already been through.

He also expressed the appreciation he had for attending a conference for Black males' interested teaching initiative. He was also impacted by being able to sit at the same table as Jason for the AAMS Program end of the year banquet. "When I sat with him I felt like a part of the community."

Like Herbie and Denzel, Tre expressed his appreciation for being able to attend the ninth annual Black Male Summit.

I attended the annual African American Male Summit at the University of Norka [pseudonym] every April. Besides the trips there are a lot of local things we here as well like guest speakers or a trip to a company to see and experience things like that. I'm usually on board with everything. I am one of the first to reach out to find out what is going on. Nine times out of ten I'm not going to say no unless I am really busy. I have received a lot of good connections from this program.

When I first started at this two years ago, a Black man from another organization gave a presentation. He was able to get me a summer internship last year and he is actually my mentor now. This semester as well I was able to get two internships from connections from the being in UCC's program and was able to work again this summer with a summer science tech program as well as get a summer internship at the casino.

Like Torrence, Sean was asked to speak about his experiences at the end of the year banquet. Denzel, Herbie, Denzel and Tre, he is grateful for being exposed to the ninth annual Black Male Summit at the University of Norka [pseudonym]. He expressed how wearing the

pin that they received during networking events at additional colleges, universities and venues inspired him to continue strive towards success.

I went to dinners, one was downtown and one was at UCC. We went to the University of Pickersburg [pseudonym] and Ronald Collins University [pseudonym] and were able to network their alumni. I believe that Jason, Cara, and Juan helped make our campus the best, because they reached out to make sure that we were aware of networking activities. Jason would make sure that he talked with me about opportunities. Networking was very powerful it opened my eyes more, because I see where I want to go and am no longer as shy as I used to be. If I keep this up, I will be able to achieve my goals. I needed the positive experiences.

It is evident from participant responses that they all benefited from being exposed to other Black males striving for the same academic and life goals. Participating in activities helped them overcome personal barriers of being shy and instilled the confidence needed to achieve completion.

Race Matters

Participants were asked about the importance of having a mentor of the same race. Torrence replied stated, “I first I thought that it was a good thing, but I’m learning and I’m finding out it doesn’t matter what color or race or nationalities.” Whereas Herbie was able to express why having a mentor of the same race was important to him. “I feel it is very important and especially in the case of African American men. They can identify with the struggles because it is hard for people to see that same struggle and recognize it and acknowledge it, but if you’re in it you’re in it and you know what it is. Being with someone else who knows and

understands that is a big deal.” Like Herbie, Denzel also believed that it is extremely important to have a mentor of the same race.

I feel that it negates a lot of the prejudgments that you feel that you will receive and the prejudgments that you will give that mentor. I know for myself that if I have a White male mentor, he feels that I know nothing and that he has to teach me everything. I know that a White female mentor, she will feel that maybe intimidated by me and that she has to prove herself that she is not intimidated by me or she will feel that I come from such a hard background that she has to over mother me, and so smothering me, in the fact will show me and do every little thing for me. Those kinds of things cripple you, because it prepares your mind not to do certain things. Having an African American mentor, that can understand where you are coming from even if they don't have the same background, understands the struggles that you go through and understands the perceptions that are placed upon you. So for them to have that kind of background, they are going to prepare you to be stronger and to grow and not try to incubate you in society but how to go out into this society and to be a citizen and a person living on your own. I just feel like you are more receptive to someone of your own race. If you have someone that is not of your same race, you don't know what they think or what they know about you and you feel that you can't even be open with them, because what if I am open and I do open up to this person and all of a sudden they don't

take it right, because we have different cultural backgrounds. It could be as little as the way that you talk to as big as your political views.

Ricky underscored Herbie and Denzel's declarations. He indicated that he believes that America has far too many issues related to race and a Black mentor understands.

I think it is very important. This country has a lot of race problems. It feels like Black men are born to not succeed in life and it is hard. It seems like when you try to succeed it is more so like people are against you. A lot of people will give up quick, but having someone like you to talk about your experiences; I found out that we have had some of the same experiences. I was able to ask and get advice from him. Having somebody care about you is important. You can tell when someone really cares about you and it can help you get over some stumbling blocks; because one little thing can change your life around whether it is good or bad and it gives you hope. There was a time when I was ready to give up and Jason gave me a lot of advice. There was an incident at the other branch of UCC where I walked out and said I'm done. A Black woman came out and asked what I was doing and her kind words brought me back. I think that because she was Black that she was able to understand. Some White people care, some White people don't care and some White people care about you not succeeding. This is why I think that it's important that your mentor is of the same race because they understand how it is to be Black.

Tre also realized the value of having mentor of the same race.

I feel that it is extremely important because someone can give you really good advice and you know that deep down there is that you know you can connect

with. You know that person could have gone through the same type of things that you face on a day to day basis. If they were not African American they can have really good advice and be a really good mentor, but deep down you will always feel that can't relate at that level.

Sean believed that having a mentor of the same race was really important. Mentioning his beginning, he said that "When I came to UCC I had a few issues personally and family issues too. My mentor helped me to overcome the obstacle courses I was dealing with. I know that if he was of another race that he would not have been able to help me."

It is evident that the majority of participants in this study reported that having a mentor of the same race was beneficial. They are certain that because their mentors were of the same race they were able to relate to their struggles. Having a mentor of the same race gave them the strength and confidence needed to overcome the academic and personal obstacles that hindered them for a short time and may have prevented them from graduating.

Similarly, Torrence recounted that having a mentor did not have an effect on helping him graduate.

Having a mentor was no help at all. I didn't have a specific mentor for specific situations. I always felt that I was by myself before I was in the program and more or less after I was involved in the program. I completed my studies by the help of Jesus.

However, Herbie credited Jason for supporting him while attending UCC. He also stated that his biggest mentor is his father.

Knowing that he had already been through community college and he had been through all the same steps that I am taking now was really, really encouraging

because they told me I could do it. I had double support; support while I was at school and again when I was at home. What a blessing!

Denzel was home schooled and stated that throughout high school he felt a little weird about his social life and social concept. He believed that having mentors helped him.

I had a lot of questions, so when people approached me in certain ways I had a lot of questions about how you should react. I had a lot of questions about how you should approach people. I was very weird about my social life and social concept. I had not been trained by the system as how I should act. I didn't go through the public school system. My mentors were able to help me not be such a calculated person. I feel that my home school experience taught me to be analytical and calculated. I would read deep into every little thing and the mentors would be like chill out its okay. Academics even though I was mostly home schooled, I was always considered a slow reader or a slow to understand what I read. I was placed in a lot of remedial classes and my mentors were able to let me know that the classes I had taken do not make me any less smart or intelligent as another person. They assured me that being hardworking, dedicated and focused is what makes a smart student or a successful student versus an unsuccessful student. Knowing that it didn't matter so much if someone was able to read all of the pages and chapters for a class. My mentor, assured me that college prepares you for life and if your processes is a little bit different as long as you're successful at the end of the day that is what important is.

Having a mentor in his life helped him overcome low self-esteem and gain confidence and to not be so analytical.

Ricky attributed the fact that he was successful in achieving his educational goal solely to his mentor. “My mentor would just listen to what I had to say and if I would have questions he would tell me the steps I needed to take to make it work. He would say go to this person or that person they are good people. Because of him I saw the quality in people.” He restated that Jason helped him gain the confidence needed to continue his education at a local university.

Tre is appreciative of the fact his mentor helped him overcome barriers.

I definitely think that everyone involved in the program was a blessing. They constantly checked up on us and cared about how we are doing. They were able to do certain things for me. It is confidential, but he helped pay for some of my tuition because I wasn't able to pay. If it wasn't for Jason, I wouldn't have even been able to pay for my last semester at UCC. And besides that, some of the deans helped me get scholarships here as well. I definitely don't have a lot of support outside of school.

Sean developed his ability to overcome negativity and become a better student through his relationship with his mentor.

My first semester here I took pre-requisite classes which was good. The classes helped build me to where I am now. It also showed me how to be responsible and helped me mature. It all played a role in helping me become independent and helped to keep me from struggling in classes. I let Jason know that I was having problems and he helped me to get help. The program helped a lot because it kept me from negativity and it kept my mind off of assuming things. The relationship that I have with my dad is like not good. My vision is different than his vision.

He never went college. My mentor was able to make me see that I could overcome these obstacles.

Mentee Benefits and Disadvantages of AAMS Participation

Torrence believed that education, good or bad, is still education. He was of the opinion that a formal classroom education was not necessary. Participating in the program helped him fill in the gaps and helped him find his purpose and direction in life. “Attending college was not my immediate goal when I graduated high school. I was one of those teens who thought that life would hand me what I wanted and that I didn’t need to go to college. After I got here, I realized that I was all wrong.”

Program participation helped Herbie gain a better perspective about the number of African American men not in college. He stressed that “It’s one thing to hear about African American men going to college, but it’s another thing to see it how many are doing it. To say it out loud is important, I feel it’s a big deal

Ricky uniquely described the benefits of the AAMS program participation by stating:

As far as benefits are concerned, people especially when they are older have experiences and wisdom. I would see something one way, and my mentor helped me see a whole different perspective. He also taught me how to treat a certain situation without being defensive, how to fight my battles in such a way. The program helped me build relationships and self-esteem, and it helped motivate me by having me not feel alone and when you have someone to motivate you, you feel more relaxed. I don’t see any disadvantages.

Like Ricky, Tre stated that there are no disadvantages to program participation. Their assertions speak positively about the effectiveness of mentoring programs.

There are definitely no disadvantages to being a part of this. The benefits are tremendous and you build these lifelong connections that are going to give back for you in the long run no matter what they may be. You may be looking for a job someday with someone that you already established a connection with.

Connections are one of the major important factors of the program. It also helped me with my academics. I was surrounded by like-minded individuals and was reminded that I had to get my act together with this, this and this.

As it relates to networking and building relationships, Sean mirrors both Ricky and Tre's perspective. He felt that "The benefits are networking is really good because you never know who can help you at the end of the day Program participation helped him grow, mature and gain interpersonal skills.

UCC Support

The importance of institutional support was demonstrated by faculty and administration when they were approached by participants. When asked how UCC demonstrated that they cared about the successful completion, Torrence replied, "I could always find somebody that was willing to help me. As soon as I lost all faith in mankind somebody always arose from the dust to save the day."

Denzel attributed part of his success to the relationship that he made with support staff.

To me it's not such a big deal to have many student friends but if you can make a friend that is an administrator or secretary like Sara [pseudonym]. Sara is a great person she has always been very kind and sweet so if you can link those kind of friendships and relationships it really made me feel as the institution was backing me and wanted me to graduate even if you don't feel that I could. If you feel that

you are not going to be able to get through this there are people that are a part of the institution that are saying no we want to see you succeed.

Herbie credited the faculty at UCC for their encouraging words as well as the time they took to attend to his academic shortcomings.

I would definitely say the faculty. The faculty at UCC, Bernard Campus was very instrumental in my continuation of pursuing my career. They were very encouraging, they helped me and academics whether it was tutoring or if I was sick and they didn't get mad at me for being sick they were really, really helpful. Some of them would approach me and some I would approach them but they were willing to help and that was very important.

Receiving acknowledgement from Jason while passing in the hallway proved beneficial to Denzel's success.

They cared because they let me know that it was important for me to go to class.

The mentors were there whenever I needed them but just being able to see my mentor in the hallways, and hear him say, "What's up big guy, how are you doing? How are things going"? It was excellent to me because academically I had the perseverance and the focus to go in and take the classes but a lot of times what that academic focus takes away from is that you may not be having a good day or you may be struggling with things. Having someone that was willing to recognize your struggle in life and recognize things that you are going through and to be there to help you out was important to me.

Ricky indicated that UCC helped him gain the confidence he needed to persist toward completion.

They taught me skills in life, character building, and socialization. When I went to UPI and it opened up doors and made me have faith in myself to do certain things and it made me see that I'm just like everybody else.

Tre was able to articulate his appreciation about transferring from one UCC campus to the Bernard campus.

I went to a different campus in 2013, and I didn't talk to anyone. I didn't have anyone who cared for me, but compared to me coming here to Bernard Campus, it was a completely different change. It kind of threw me off because of how helpful they were and helped me know that they wanted to help me. They constantly checked in with me, and I could stop and talk with faculty and Jason in their offices. Coming to this campus made me want to actually make the effort to talk to them. That was honestly a major help for me because at the other campus the program was not as easy to be a part of. My last two years at UCC were the most successful academically that I had ever been. They helped me in all aspects of my life. I felt like they actually care about me.

Like Sean, Tre transferred to Bernard from another campus. He stated, "The mentoring program at this campus is a lot different from the other campus. I attended orientation and was matched with a mentor but rarely communicated with him. I wasn't doing well and was going to drop out but decided to try another campus and it was a blessing."

It is evident that building relationships with faculty and administrators is a necessary ingredient for successful program implementation and completion. Although the same program was offered at a different campus, program success depends on the interaction between student, their mentor, faculty, and the degree to which administration extends essential resources.

Graduation and the Success of Others

This review of interviews revealed the inspiration that contributed to the successful completion of the participants' academic goals. Torrence stated, "The inspiration I received from my mentor along the road to getting my education was a conglomeration of everything and everyone else. I was determined to reach my goals and was happy that there was someone to help me fill the void

Herbie could foresee his end goal. In his mind, he felt that "I was seeing the end; I had to keep looking towards the end and sometimes when I got bogged down with classwork I would talk with Jason or the guys in the program to get me through. Sometimes it looked like it was never going to end. I knew that I had to keep reaching for my goal."

Ricky attributes his success to the manner in which his mentor conducted himself. Crediting Jason's role, he stated that "The advice that my mentor gave me about always being defensive helped me realize that not everyone was racist. Once I dropped my guard I was able to allow them to show me the way."

Tre pinpointed his success to not wanting to fall behind his peers in the program. "When I was around people striving to do better, it motivated me. Everyone else in the program was doing well and I didn't want to be left behind

Part of Sean's motivation came from people not involved in the program.

People would say to me, oh you're in school, you're doing this and you're doing that. I connected myself with my family and also my community. The mentors at the UCC were there to help. Learning how to open my mouth and tell someone that I needed help was good for me. I learned not to wait in the back for someone

to hand me something. I had to go get it. Personally it was just a great experience all around, UCC and the mentorship program has done a magnificent job.

When participants were asked about the importance of seeing other African American males succeed, Torrence's hope is that they realize that it is a learning process and that it is important that they spread the word about the program to others.

I think we sometimes see other Black males and it's like the crab effect. We are all trying to get out of the pot instead, but sometimes, we end up falling back into the pot. We need to be deprogrammed so that we can help keep each other up instead of down. If we did, the better off the whole race will be.

At one of the AAMS meetings, Torrence was introduced to a young Black man who had just earned his doctorate. Learning that the man had graduated from the same school district under similar circumstances was inspirational. Torrence stated that, "It made me feel that my goal to earn a doctorate is possible."

When Denzel was asked about the importance of the success of other Black males, he replied:

Knowing how much help I had and how many mentors I have had behind me I feel that it is extremely important for me at least to give back in that way and be a mentor in the future. I want to make sure that there are a lot of other successful Black men just like me.

Visiting a local university and learning that the tour guide was a past participant of the program is what inspired Denzel to apply to the university.

When reflecting on this experience, Herbie believed that:

It is extremely important to see other African American males succeed because it feels like the real truth. When you see another African American succeed it is

possible especially when it is a peer. When you see someone that is in a class or someone that sits across from you or someone from your neighborhood and they are succeeding it drives me even more so.

Herbie further believed that it is important that all Black males never give up.

Tre believed that it is extremely important to mentor someone of the same race and gender.

If you see someone that looks like you that went through the same things you have gone through and they had a similar childhood and they were able to succeed. It is like be able to put a face with a name. This person is in charge of this company, I can do that too. I feel like it is a nice humbling experience, honestly I want to be one of those people in the future so people can look at me and say he made it, I can do it too.

Sean has a family history of strong, accomplished men. They have set examples before him and he plans to be as successful and is determined to mentor African American men who are not related to him.

My uncle went to real top notch naval school in the Naval Academy. He was also in the ROTC program; he did four years there and then went into the navy as an officer. He is still there and has been since I was born so we are talking 22 plus years so now. He reached his peak and he is up to be a commander. I look at him, and I look at my other uncles who are police officers and in the military. My cousins, one is becoming a lawyer and one that is a doctor, generations of us are either in school, about to graduate or did graduate college. It not only motivates me, but it gives me hope as well because you can be successful and need to lead by example. My sister is 17 and about to graduate from high school next year,

and she looks up to me, and I have younger kids that look up to me and think, 'wow he is in school, and I can do that too.' It's all about motivation and also having determination, it is not your parents' decision; it's your decision.

Ricky's statement speaks to the troubling social factors espoused by Harper & Davis (2012) concerning peer pressure and academic achievement.

It is very important, when I feel like I am the only African American male. I feel that I don't even want to be there. I think I did something to sell myself out or I sold myself short, when I'm the only African American male I feel like I am doing something wrong. I have a couple friends who have completed college. I know very few people who have completed college. I probably could count them all on my hand of friends that I grew up with there is probably one hand maybe two but thinking off the top of my head it is more like one handful. My mom told me besides my nephew who is in college and my little brother who is in college who have not graduated yet but me got my associates degree I am the first one in my family who has gotten a degree. For you to succeed you need to have good people in your corner.

Ricky's statement also correlates with the support measures that mentoring offers that McClure (2006) proposed to help Black males overcome academic challenges and feelings of isolation. Program participation stressed the importance of seeing other Black male's college success in this manner. Furthermore, Ricky added that "If you see someone that looks like you and they had a similar childhood you can encourage them to succeed." Sean stated that "it is important for him to lead by example. I have younger kids that look up to me." Participant delineations concerning the importance of wanting to see other African American males achieve

success affirms Shaun R. Harper's (2012) position of reversing the one side emphasize of failure to the relevance and importance of gaining insights from Black males who have been successful.

Best and Challenges of the AAMS Mentoring Program

When asked to describe the best part about participating in the AAMS initiative, Denzel reflected and stated that:

Giving me a chance to see outside of where I was and giving me a chance to leave the city and seeing the world or the bigger picture because so many times you can get caught up in the small area that you in that there is nothing outside of it but that helped me to see more.

His greatest challenge is facing the fact that programs like this are needed:

I have always kind of seen that there was a lack of diversity, but the fact that we needed to have so much encouragement and pulling individuals out of where they were and how they couldn't see that or I couldn't see that. That was the biggest problem for me, why do we need this program and how can we change it where in the future these programs won't be necessary.

The best part and the challenges of participation in the program for Herbie lie in the unity needed to pull an entire race forward through fellowship. Being in the presence of like-minded individuals was the best part about being involved in the program for him.

The best part was being around like-minded students and peers but also like-minded adults. The stigma is that adults, they don't understand young people or they don't get you a lot of times but to be with like-minded adults who want to see you succeed and aren't trying to live vicariously through you but have the knowledge and understanding as a mentor to say 'you are going to succeed this

way' and they allow you to grow your way. It may not be the way they grew, but they understand that so like mindedness and the unity is such an important thing that African American culture is missing, because it has been driven out of us, but you have to be categorized you have the rich, the poor and the middle class, you have the posh, you have the ghetto and these people are kings and queens and other ways. To have the unity that you can come from different neighborhoods, but we all understand that we want to do better, not just for us but better for our families and better for our communities.

Networking was the best part about participating in the program for Ricky. "Getting to know people and having the skills to talk to them and building relationships along with socializing." He further stated that the program helped him overcome the challenge of being shy. "I'm a shy person I have a hard time having a conversation with people and trying to be assertive was hard for me too because is not something that comes easily to me."

Tre appreciated the relationships and connections that he gained. "I know they are constantly going to be in my life from this moment forward." He was challenged by the amount of time that was needed to be committed to the program.

Participation in the program exposed Sean to people who were different than him and taught him to socialize with them.

It gave me exposure and taught me how to talk to people. It gave me a chance to travel outside of the city where I grew up and meet people from different states including the West, Midwest, East Coast the South and the North. I met many people that have similar stories that could relate to me. I also made friends that are like family. We all laugh and giggle and you know; it is all about having fun

too as well. The challenge was getting to know people that you just met. I had to understand that person and understand they were coming from. I liked how we shared our stories about how the mentoring program has helped us.

Torrence was pleased with the fact that he could always find someone willing to help him but was dismayed that he was not able to attend the Black Male Summit. He voiced his disappointment in this manner:

I was supposed to travel to a conference. This was one of the things I was supposed to do. I was told that there were only nine slots available. My mentor had been trying to contact me, but by the time I got back to him, it was too late. How does a college this size go from nine slots available to none? I was told that I didn't make the cut.

Ideal Program

Given his "druthers", Torrence believed that the program could better assist students by using the peer-to-peer model. "I believe that the most effective mentoring comes from peers. I believe the program would be far more successful than this old man trying to tell me what to do."

Whereas Herbie suggests, "We could pick from a pool of individuals and match that individual with another individual. I would find individuals and match them up with people with similar backgrounds so that we could maximize the potential of the individual."

Denzel believed that the ideal mentoring program would be geared toward apprenticeships. "I feel that the biggest difficulty I had was what do I do after I received my four year degree. Someone working in my field could show me what steps I needed to take and help me to build the experience needed to get into the field."

While Tre stated that, “All the staff would definitely be African American. They are able to relate to them first and foremost

Based on mentee reflections, they believed that their experience would have been greatly enhanced if the program would have included peer to peer mentoring, included mentors from the workforce, and would have provided apprenticeships and internship opportunities. All reinforced the view that mentors should be African American.

Additional Thoughts

Torrence stated, “I think the idea of the African American Males Scholars Program is a fantastic idea it just needs a lot of help.” Herbie believed in the importance of having a mentor. “I would say that if it is in anyone’s power to find a mentor that it is very important to find a mentor because it helps you to understand that it is okay to ask for help and it is okay to need help and you shouldn’t feel bad that you can’t do everything.” Denzel suggests that the gap between high school and college should be filled.

You still have this assembly line mindset in high school and in college there is nothing to seal that gap from what I want to do in high school to what I want to do in college. I feel it is okay to not know what you want to do when you go to college but I think it is ridiculous to have the amount of students that do not know what they want to do by the time they get to college, knowing that you have to spend four or five years in college to find out what you want to do and then to spend five or six years in the field that you want to get to so you can get to the job you want. I feel that we need to cut five years of that off by preparing the students in high school so even if they don’t go into that major when they get to college they at least have the opportunity to experience it.

Ricky reiterated, “Mentoring is good, it is good to know someone has succeeded and had the same experiences that you can relate to you.” Tre believes that mentoring is something that everyone should do and believes that, “You get out of it what you put into it.” Sean agrees with Tre and stated, “In order for you to get the benefits of mentoring you have to put yourself into it.”

Another emergent theme was the participant’s relationship with God. Torrence stated, “I feel that God and my mentor provided me with the inspiration that I needed to stay on the road to get my education.” Herbie reported that, “God cleared the way for me. He made a way out of no way.” Denzel expressed, “Whatever God has for you is yours. I know in my heart that He intends for me to be successful and I am grateful to Him for this.” Tre stated that, “I know that God worked through my mentor to help me pay my tuition.” Sean reported that, “I felt like the prodigal son. I was lost and God place my mentor in my life to find me.”

Additional Emergent Themes

The review of interviews disclosed three emergent themes. First, participants attributed their ability to successfully complete their program of study to their belief in God. Secondly, their awareness of widely-held beliefs about the unlikeliness of Black males to obtain a college degree provided additional motivation to graduate. Lastly, half of the participants in this study were raised in a female single parent household. Based on these revelations, mentees understood that earning a college degree is a way to change their socioeconomic circumstances in the future.

Summary

This chapter presented the experiences of the participants involved in a community college completion mentoring initiative for African American males. Their stories provided insights in relation to their academic journeys. Personal accounts were shared about the racism

that they experienced from grade school through college. Their narratives included feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, employing coping mechanisms, and being unfairly treated by White teachers. These experiences had a significant impact and motivated participants to strive toward academic success; they also reinforced the need for academic mentoring initiatives. Analysis also revealed that communication, trust, respect and having someone to applaud their academic endeavors played a significant part in leading them to and through the path to graduation. The final chapter will discuss collected participant perceptions and their relationship to the theoretical foundations of Shandley (1989), Astin (1993) and Tinto (1993), the implications and recommendations from this study could be used for future studies.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Chapter five examines the themes that emerged through interviews with three current mentors and six past participants of a community college academic mentoring initiative for African American males. The coordinating analysis will present associations between social science theories and concepts. The discussion will also include the two research questions that guided the study, derive the conclusions and implications of this study, and make recommendations for the program and for future studies.

The theoretical foundations that this study examined are Shandley's (1989) concept of mentoring in higher education processes, Astin's (1993) theory of involvement and Tinto's (1993) academic and social integration theoretical approach.

Shandley's (1989) concepts of mentoring from a higher education prospective in this study focused on four processes. The four tenets that he highlights include intentional interaction between two or more individuals, creating a nurturing relationship to foster the growth and development of a protégé, mentoring as an insightful process and mentoring as a supportive, often protective process.

Astin's (1993) theory of involvement was used to understand the correlation between student involvement in activities, mentoring programs and academic success. According to Astin, the probability of achieving graduation occurs more frequently when students are involved regularly in their learning.

Tinto's (1993) academic and social integration theoretical model asserts that when a student's attitude reflects positively about educational norms, the more likely they are to achieve completion. He further contends that implementing this framework encourages and creates a

favorable environment to circumvent a student's feelings of isolation and alienation. This relationship builds a connection between administrator's faculty and staff.

Research Question One: What are the perceptions of current mentors in a community college African American mentoring initiative related to their impact on helping students achieve program completion?

The first research question investigated the experiences of current mentors of a community college race and gender specific mentoring initiative. Specifically, the impact that mentors had on helping participants achieve completion.

The mentors in this study overwhelmingly agreed that their educational experiences impacted their philosophies as well as their aspirations to serve as mentors.

Mentor Perceptions Of Mentoring

Juan's philosophy of mentoring was, "Failure is an event, not a person. Sometimes they mentoring program participants get wrapped up to believe they are a failure. So I have a no nonsense, no excuse policy to have them believe they can do great things and part of this is holding them accountable and responsible

Whereas Cara's philosophy entailed, "Try to serve as a resource a valuable resource that they can tap. I think it is important to try to understand some of the things that they may be encountering as a result of their family history and personal lives. I know that they are not one dimensional. Empower them by giving them achievable tasks."

Moreover, Jason's philosophy is similar to Juan's. He stated that "I will address whatever you need to be responsible and accountable for your actions. I can't make you go to class or make you do assignments, that's up to you." Both Juan and Jason's philosophy about mentoring is related to mentee responsibility and accountability, while Cara's philosophy aligns with the

ideology of empowerment. Collectively, all mentor philosophies lead to student participants' academic success.

Mentor Experiences of Grade School Racism, Degree Attainment, Reaching Back

This study also found that the two male mentors experienced grade school racism. Both male mentors described feelings of isolation, incidents of being singled out to be physically punished in front of classmates, segregation, and not being encouraged to attend college by White female teachers. Both reported that these experiences lead to academic struggles and adverse behavior. Whereas, the manner in which Cara experienced racism differed vastly from the African American males in this study. She attended Catholic school grades K-12 and was one of six African American students. She believed these experiences laid the foundation that equipped her with the ability to adapt in any situation.

The academic experiences of the two African American male mentors' kindergarten through grade 12 had a tremendous negative impact on their perceptions about school and their academic growth. Their histories are consistent with Bonner's (2014) contention that African American males P-12 have been unfairly categorized, Kenyatta's (2012) study on academic progression and Anderson's (2006) assertion regarding low teacher expectation as the reason for low African American male enrollment in college.

By comparison, Cara's experience was consistent with the contention that African American women in higher education possess an enormous amount of tenacity, as mentioned in Henry (2010). In spite of this, both African American male mentors graduated from college. Juan graduated from a Historically Black University (HBCU) and earned his master's degree from a private college. Furthermore, he is currently enrolled in a doctorate program. Jason attended a Predominately White Institution (PWI) on a football scholarship, graduated, and then played

professional football. Cara attended a HBCU out of high school and transferred to a Catholic University from which she graduated. Later, she earned her master's degree from a Catholic University and is currently enrolled in a doctoral program.

The experience of having mentors in their lives is what prompted all to be of service to others both academically and personally.

Mentors Perceptions of Mentoring

At some point, all the mentors in this study were mentored throughout their own academic trajectory. All agreed that in order for the mentor-mentee relationship to be successful, both parties must be involved in cultivating and sustaining an intentional two-way relationship. The interactions that occurred is congruent with LaVant's (1997) contention that the progression of this intentional collaboration provides the opportunity for the mentor to impart wisdom upon their protégée. This outcome is also consistent with Kram's (1985) research on mentoring and the transfer of knowledge from an older more knowledgeable individual to less experienced individuals. This relationship also supports Hall's (2015) belief that mentoring is a vertical progression towards establishing a trustworthy relationship with an adult that provides support to a younger individual who needs direction and support. The establishment of the aforementioned relationships is also consistent with Shandley's (1989) concept of intentional processes.

Juan's African American male mentor was introduced into his life as a result of a behavioral infraction during elementary school. His objective to not disappoint his mentor is what encouraged him to discontinue the inappropriate social behaviors that Bell (2010) outlined as a reason that a disproportionate number of Black males are not meaningfully engaged in their education. The fact that his conduct was redirected most likely deterred his teacher from arriving at a preconceived notion that he had no concern for his education.

Jason's mentor was his Italian-American football coach. This relationship is consistent with Galbraith (2001) assertion that mentoring requires more than providing advice and Hall's (2015) concept of giving a social learning environment that imparts support and direction for younger aged individuals.

Cara's mentoring experiences differed vastly from Juan and Jason. She did not have a mentor throughout her life. Being mentored in college occurred by happenstance.

My history of being a mentor is more closely tied to my background in serving as that person to come and talk to as the younger folks at church and just being able to a source of encouragement to them and to be a help them to stretch themselves, to go beyond what they see and to envision themselves to become and to let them know that that is indeed possible for them to do. As far as being mentored myself, I really didn't experience it that much but I did when I was young and it wasn't until college [that a mentor] recruited me. My admissions counselor served as my mentor to me and she was an African American, but she certainly saw something in me and always spoken to my life regarding this is what you want to do this is what you can do and this is the path you can take and even to this day we still maintain a close relationship.

The mentoring experiences of Juan, Cara, and Jason align with Bandura's (1986, 1997) cognitive theory. His assertion is that specific social behavior is induced by engaging individuals in activities that conjoin with the confidence needed to achieve goals. Sorrentino's (2006) concept of motivational strategies to create meaningful relationships related strongly when applied to the mentor experiences of mentoring.

Mentor Training and Responsibilities for AAMS

Mentors stated that UCC did not provide formal training. Juan stated, “There really wasn’t any formal training in relation to AAMS, because we were relatively new and basically, I believe they were trying to assign people who they believed would play well off of each other’s experiences to try to create a successful program.” Cara also disclosed, “There wasn’t any formal training or preparation I guess it just happened on the strength of our character in terms of being able to be there and assist the students with whatever they needed in order to graduate.” In contrast, Jason’s position at the college and prior formal mentor training equipped him with the time and tools to serve effectively in the mentor role. His experience provided the expertise needed to inspire the motivation and behavior vital for student success. Jason’s contributions corresponded with both Bonner (2014) and Sorrentino’s (2006) endorsement of empirically based academic mentoring programs.

Cara raised a concern about the lack of administrators and faculty who availed themselves to serve as mentors. She stated that, “That the most challenging aspect is not having a lot of people on board to help. Several of our colleagues were also assigned to this duty but only a few of them participated.” “Jason stated that, “I have had some negative feedback from UCC. I was asked why I encouraged seven students go to a major university for their engineering program. A former participant transferred to the university where I took my students for a field trip. He talked with them and they realized they could continue on the same path.” The lack of participation by UCC employees conceivably corresponds with Yukel’s (2014) designation of ‘laggard.’ According to Yukel (2014), laggards participate when participation has been mandated. Although this may be true, this group of individuals was not included in this study.

Jason's willingness to serve without hesitation aligned with Roger's (2003) label of innovator. According to Rogers's (2003), innovators incorporate advancements and new activities into their daily responsibilities. Juan and Cara's cooperation and participation was of equal importance. Time constraints but willingness to serve placed them as early adopters as described by Roger's (2003). Both were open to change and divulged that they were not able to fully execute the duties and responsibilities that AAMS required. The duties of their primary positions prevented them from being as readily available as Jason.

The Joys and Challenges of Mentoring

The results of this study found that the program was established to provide the support that students needed to persist and overcome the academic, personal, and social barriers that have historically contributed to African American male community college attrition. All mentors agreed that witnessing participants achieve graduation was the greatest joy. Juan stated, "...watching students walk across that stage. The fact that I was able to contribute a small portion and add to their success a great joy of mine." Jason expressed, that "...seeing their success. One of the best things for me is to see some of the young men that you had to take by the hand and take across the street so to speak and take these African American men to realize they can take the initiative to go on to bigger and better things." Cara's sentiments are congruent with both Juan and Jason's when she expressed that "Being able to see them graduate, that is the greatest joy to know that you played a special part of them finishing what they set out to accomplish."

According to LaVant et al. (1997), mentoring initiatives are powerful and effective and serve as a tool to assist students overcome barriers and achieve completion. As evidenced via mentor acknowledgements, the strategies by which they supported participants to achieve

success positively affected retention and completion. Moreover, achieving academic completion through mentoring also aligns with Johnson (2006), Crisp and Cruz's (2009) assertion that mentoring provides the factors needed to guide program participants towards success.

Conversely, Juan conveyed that he was challenged by, "getting the student to a place where they started taking their education really seriously and taking themselves seriously that they believed in themselves." Mentors espoused that the dissension of UCC non-participating colleagues was of great concern. The study also found that UCC is committed to educating African American males and to participation in the community college success initiative, Achieving the Dream National Reform.

Mentors who participated in this study recognized that their individual life and educational experiences, kindergarten through college, were responsible for developing their understanding of the needs and imperatives for African American male community college mentoring programs. Their viewpoints were evidenced in their statements and by their commitment to serving in this capacity. Despite the challenges of time limitations, lack of resources and in some instances, institutional pushback, they were successful in assisting mentees achieve their educational goals.

The second research question investigated the experiences of past participants of a community college race and gender specific mentoring initiative. Specifically, the question evaluated the impact that the mentor- mentee relationship had on achieving completion.

Research Question Two: What are the perceptions of past participants of a community college African American mentoring initiative related to the impact mentoring had on their achieving program completion?

Mentee Perceptions of Mentor

The mentees in this study provided interrelated interpretations of the definition of mentor. In general, they believed a mentor to be someone with the experience and skills to help others attain academic, personal, and career goals. By and large, they believed a mentor to also be someone who gives encouragement and is willing to help. Three of the mentees in this study serve as mentors in neighborhood after school programs for youth. The results of this study also found that two mentees acknowledged their fathers as the first mentor in their lives. They further espoused that additional mentors included African American men from their church, uncles, and African American men from the music and arts fields. One subject acknowledged that he had not experienced having a mentor in his life prior to being mandated by the Dean of Students to participate in the African American Male Scholars (AAMS) program.

Mentee Socialization and Networking

All mentees agreed that participation in the African American Male Scholar (AAMS) program exposed them to unfamiliar academic and social opportunities that they would by no other means have experienced. Participants in this study agreed that the opportunities for social interaction influenced the manner in which they conducted themselves at school, during conferences, during meetings, and while attending events. Herbie expressed his appreciation for the AAMS sponsored Dining Etiquette workshop that he attended. He stated that, "I had no idea that one fork is for salad and the other was to for the meal." Offering a Dining Etiquette workshop was an intentional effort of the AAMS program to help mentees develop appropriate interpersonal skills and knowledge to be utilized during public interactions. Ricky expressed his happiness for being seated at the same table with his mentor during the end of year banquet. He stated that, "When I sat with him I felt like a part of the community." Torrence and Sean were

asked to speak at the year-end banquet. Both admitted that this opportunity empowered them and strengthened their self-confidence.

All agreed that they benefited tremendously by attending summits with other African American male college students who shared the same academic goals. They believed that attending summits, conferences, and meeting helped them gain networking skills and two participants attributed participation for helping them overcome shyness. One mentee reported that networking helped him overcome feelings of isolation. Denzel stated, "I think that networking helped me with the fact that I was home schooled. All throughout high school I was very weird about my social life and my social concept." Overall, all believed the benefits of learning to network increased their self-esteem and strengthened their ability to develop the connections vital to yielding employment beyond college.

Academic Self Confidence

Mentees maintained that program participation helped them gain the academic and self-confidence that they needed to persevere. Denzel stated that program participation helped him to overcome the negative feelings that he had about having to take remedial classes. "My mentor let me know that the classes I had taken did not make me less smart or intelligent than another person, that being hardworking, dedicated, and focused is what makes a smart student or a successful student versus an unsuccessful student." All realized the importance and benefits of being amenable to involving themselves in Urban Community College (UCC) learning support services and the advantages of peer tutoring. In fact, Ricky had not realized that he had the acumen to serve as an accounting tutor. "I was approached by my accounting teacher and asked if I would be interested in being a peer tutor. He made me realize that I was smart regardless of my past." Non-traditional aged Torrence believed that the aforementioned services helped him

gain the academic confidence and skills that he was lacking. He stated, “When I told my mentor that I was reluctant about going to the learning center because of my age, he assured me that it would be to my advantage and then offered to walk me there.” These experiences support Spurgeon and Myers (2010) assertion regarding the importance of mentors availing themselves to Black males attending predominately White universities (PWI) (Pillay, 2005). This rapport was vital and helped participants develop a healthy self-image and positive racial identity.

Black Like Me

Mentees reported that having a same race mentor evoked a positive self-image. Ricky reported, “The program helped me build relationships and self-esteem and it helped motivate me to not feel alone and trust White people. When you have someone that is Black like you, they motivate you and help you feel more relaxed.” Participants benefited from the coping mechanisms that were instilled in them by their same-race mentor. Mentees also reported that that they were more receptive to someone of their own race. The further believed that their same-race mentor was able to identify and relate to the daily struggle of being a Black male. They also reported that having a mentor of the same race reminded them of the necessity of disavowing society biases about them. Sean recalled a time when his mentor pulled him aside in the hallway. “I was walking to my car after class and I heard someone calling my name. I turned around and it was my mentor. He told me that I needed to wear a belt because he didn’t appreciate seeing my jeans hanging from my butt. He explained to me that people would judge me.” Mentor teachings were instrumental in helping mentees make the social connections and develop the positive sense of self that they needed to achieve graduation and successfully transfer to a four year college or university to continue their studies.

Mentee experiences correlated with Ong, Burrow, and Fuller-Roswell's (2012) emphasis on the imperativeness and need for the development of positive self-regard in Black males. Participant experiences also supported Wood, Newman, and Harris III (2015) assertion that academic mentoring instills self-efficacy and leads to greater academic outcomes. Having a mentor of the same race helped them overcome the negative stereotypes that have been imposed upon them by society and helped them overcome academic and personal struggles.

Mentee Advantages of Program Participation

Comments regarding the impact that participation in the African American Male Scholars program had on its participants support Shandley's (1989) mentoring concept in higher education. This assertion contended that purposeful and encouraging interaction between two or more individuals influences growth. Astin's (1993) theory of student involvement in college activities correlated with Shandley's (1989) concept. Furthermore, the impact that AAMS participation had on each of the participants supported Tinto's (1993) academic and social integration theory that asserted that a student's attitude reflects positively within an encouraging atmosphere. Tinto's (1993) concept of institutional commitment that asserted that student success and persistence is related to an institutions commitment to students.

Institutional Encouragement

Numerous indicators of institutional encouragement were acknowledged via mentee comments. Findings indicated that that UCC's mentors provided mentees with the academic support, personal support, social skills, self-confidence, and administrative support needed to achieve the goal of graduation. Based on what they experienced, mentees also expressed their willingness to serve as peer mentors. Nevertheless, mentors indicated the need for additional institutional support.

Based on the interviews of all nine participants interviewed in his study, the data analysis established the suggestion that African American male community college mentoring programs can lead to community college completion. The next section will examine the three concepts and their relationship to the concepts and theoretical foundations that this study was based upon.

Relationship to Concepts and Theoretical Foundations

This study examined three theoretical foundations and their relationship to achieving graduation via participation in a community college mentoring program for African American males. Shandley's (1989) mentoring concept in higher education, Astin's (1993) theory of involvement, and Tinto's (1993) academic and social integration theoretical model provided the framework to discover the perceptions of current mentors and past participants.

Shandley's Concept of Mentoring

Shandley's (1989) concept of mentoring from a higher education perspective was the first framework examined in this study. This theory is comprised of three behaviors that two or more individuals must be involved in in order to substantiate mentoring. These interactions assist with the growth and development of the novice individual. The three precepts of Shandley's (1989) concept of mentoring include intentional interaction, nurturing, and the application of acquired insights by the protégé.

Participants in this study reported the benefits of developing a meaningful mentor mentee relationship provided opportunities for social interaction, academic support, building self-esteem, professional development, and overcoming challenges. Mentees also reported that the aforementioned occurrences created the motivation and desire to persist towards completion. Tre reflected upon his gratitude to his mentor for helping him overcome a financial barrier, "My

mentor constantly checked up on me. He helped pay some of tuition during my last semester at UCC.”

Mentees also indicated that the accessibility of Urban Community Bernard Campus mentors assisted them with their adjustment to the community college environment. Sean indicated that he attended a different campus prior to taking classes at the Bernard campus. He revealed, “I went to a different campus and didn’t talk to anyone. I didn’t have anyone who cared for me but coming to Bernard campus was different. I was able to go to see my mentor when I needed. That was major for me.” As indicated through analysis, the African American Male Scholars Program was an effective tool for providing the mentoring support necessary to overcome the barriers to obtaining a community college degree and supported the assertions of Shandley’s (1989) concept of mentoring. All participants agreed that participation in the program had an impact on their ability to complete their degree.

Astin’s Theory of Involvement

Astin’s (1993) theory of involvement was the second theoretical framework evaluated in this research and was helpful in reporting the perceptions of all participants. In concept, this model refers to the amount of time and effort a student devotes to academics.

There are five basic assumptions within Astin’s (1993) theory of involvement. The first factor is the extent of time and psychological energy a student devotes to achieving their desired outcome. The second is that student involvement is continuous and is dependent upon the amount of time and effort invested in persisting towards the goal. The third involvement is quantitative and qualitative and directly impacts student growth. Lastly, Astin’s (1993) theory of involvement asserts that a correlation exist between involvement in activities and academic performance. Participant’s reported that there were several opportunities for participation in

workshops, conferences, meetings, tutoring, peer interaction, and to meet with their mentor. By devoting their time, and energy, mentee's acquired the knowledge, social skills and self-confidence necessary to create the motivation needed to persist. The study purposely examined participant perceptions of mentor program participation and found that all participants indicated that participation was the key factor to gaining academic ability and confidence. Astin's (1993) theory of involvement supports the idea that community college mentoring programs for African American males are effective. This theory supports the idea that involvement in mentoring programs has an impact on retention and the motivation needed to assist participants achieve community college completion and beyond.

Tinto's Academic and Social Integration Theory

The last theoretical framework for this study is Tinto's (1993) integration framework. Tinto (1993) contends that students are more likely to be retained by community colleges if they entrench themselves in the social and academic facets of the institution. Individuals who connect and bond with programs and engage in academic activities are more likely to persist towards completion. Tinto (1993) maintains that student integration comes about inside two dimensions, academic and social. Academic and social integration emerges when individuals ascribe to the academic and social life of the institution. The combination of these concepts enhance one another. Integration can formal or informal and do not need to be equally incorporated. This approach is capable of fostering persistence (Karp, Hughes, & O'Gara, 2008). The participants indicated that participation in Urban Community College's African American Male Scholars program exposed them to opportunities that changed their world view. Program participation helped them achieve their academic goals, further strengthen established relationship and

continue of begin serving as mentor's. Tinto's (1993) integration theory was appropriate for seeking the perceptions of participants.

Conclusions

Results of this research provided an analysis of the perceptions of current mentors and past participants in a community college mentoring program for African American males and their African American mentors. All participants disclosed how similar and distinctive opportunities for academic growth, mentor-mentee interaction, institutional support, family influences, peer interaction, social interaction, and for some, an increase in self-esteem influenced their perceptions about the benefits of program participation and academic success. This was a crucial factor because the primary reason for program participation is to assist with retention and provide the support needed to help African American males overcome discouraging factors that impact college success. This study clearly demonstrated that particular aspects of community college academic mentoring programs for Black males should continue to be investigated. Future research should also be conducted to determine if all participants of the African American Males Scholar's Program at all four Urban Community College campuses also had higher retention and graduation rates. In addition, recognized constraints placed on administrators and faculty members serving as mentors should also be evaluated. Additional studies are needed to examine all factors of community college academic mentoring programs. Addressing these factors could possibly improve program competencies.

The results of this study are promising and show that under the right conditions, participation in race and gender specific academic mentoring programs increases a participant's chance of successfully attaining a community college diploma, certificate, associate's degree or

transfer to a college or university to earn a bachelor's degree and beyond. This is an important finding because it will enable community colleges to evaluate existing program supports.

Furthermore, this study increases recognition of the importance of the community colleges' role in the academic success of all students and further addresses the unique dilemma of Black males.

Implications

The finding of this research provides a comprehensive analysis of mentor and mentee participant experiences in a community college mentoring program for African American males. All participants share comparable and contrasting experiences. Contributory experiences also attributed to participant success. Program participation fostered mentee personal growth and academic development. Participant experiences support the LaVant et al.(1997) concept that mentoring programs are an effective tool to assist students overcome barriers and achieve success and Hall's (2015) belief that mentoring is a vertical progression towards the establishment of a trustworthy relationship that provides direction and support. Therefore, the attributes of mentoring influence and cultivate the perseverance needed to persist towards graduation. Study results revealed the benefits of participation and the precepts that were applied that lead to completion. Results of this study support emergent research concerning this subject matter and that under the right conditions, the expectation of completion of a community college credential by African American males can be normalized. This finding reinforces Brown and Bartee's (2009) perception of why educational institutions are obligated to foster the academic growth and success of African American male's seeking a college degree.

Furthermore, the study reinforced the statistic that enrolling in community college is the access point to higher education for the subjects participating in this study. This finding supports

Wood and Williams (2013) contention that community colleges are the entry point for African American males who want to change their social position and economic strata. It is imperative that community colleges remain vigilant with regard to the success of all students, especially African American males. This study found that participants developed the social skills needed to navigate educational systems. This finding has significant implications for community college mentoring programs because it supports the view that mentoring is more than just an intervention program or process. The findings of this study provide evidence that formal mentoring programs enhance the retention and academic success of African American males.

Additionally, this study underscored the likelihood that mentees will persist towards earning additional degrees. It is conceivable that mentoring programs have the ability to be designed in a manner that sanctions participants to be liable for their educational, personal and professional development. It cannot be assumed that mentoring single-handedly as the sole precursor for academic achievement but a reasonable relationship exists between mentoring and heuristics. This research indicates that mentoring programs assist students with academic performance, persistence and success.

Prospective Program Design

Various models of mentoring in community colleges, colleges and universities, healthcare and Fortune 1000 companies were presented in this study. All share the idea that mentoring is a nurturing process that is intended to advance the development of novice individuals who are interested in a particular field of study or career. This research revealed that in the business and healthcare industries mentees are matched with individuals in a particular career field. Research conducted by Kahle-Piasecki (2011) of Fortune 1000 companies concluded that structured mentoring practices in this sector have been effective. Other fields such

as healthcare have seen great success with mentoring programs and supporting mentees' career aspirations (Bourke, Waite, & Wright 2014).

Although the African American Male Scholars (AAMS) program is similar in concept to the aforementioned mentoring models, all participants in this study believed that the program would have been of greater significance if the program would have included peer mentoring, mentors from the career of interest, mentors within the same academic major, and increased participation by Urban Community College (UCC) administrative employees and faculty members. Juan stated "I think having a program with mentors who have similar careers, the same push, and motivation to instruct and guide them would have improved program outcomes." For the same reason, Denzel believed that, "The ideal mentoring program would be geared towards apprenticeships. Someone working in my field could show me what steps I needed to take and help me build the experience needed to get into the field." Jason stated that, "I would do a little fine tuning. I would have more leaders of color from the community come back and give their story." Finally, Cara believed, "The ideal program design would include a high school to community college mentoring program." All participant comments regarding prospective program design assimilate with the community college mentoring models for African American male college programs included in chapter two of this study.

This study revealed that UCC's existing program model appears to have been successful in assisting the six former students who participated in this study achieve the goal of graduation but is in need of additional support. It appears that the Bernard Campus African American Male Scholars Program has been effective in assisting the African American males attending this campus achieve graduation.

Future Program Recommendations

In view of the fact that community college African American male academic mentoring programs serve as an opportunity to foster the development of African American males socially and academically, student participants proposed that UCC administrators revise the current program to include a community college preparation program for high school aged African American males. They believed that current mentees and AAMS alumni are obligated to serve as mentors and are needed to foster the behavior and mind-set needed to help Black males overcome the academic and social barriers that have historically and are currently preventing them from pursuing a college education. They also believed that the current program design should be revised to allow professional African American males from various career areas and apprenticeship sectors to serve as UCC mentors. Both mentors and mentees agreed that nurturing naturally occurred as a result of participation, but additional activities are needed to cultivate rapport. Participants believed that the program should include additional forums to discuss academic confidence, self-efficacy, personal beliefs and social frustrations. Mentees felt the need to express the fact that they do care about their education and their desire and willingness to increase program participation through involvement in community engagement activities and college recruitment events.

Upon analyzing the results, evidence suggests that community college administrators must understand that additional institutional resources are needed to fully serve current and prospective participants. Moreover, the success of mentoring programs rests on the fact that mentors are compelled to take on additional responsibilities without proper training or compensation in addition to established workplace responsibilities. Therefore, compensation and training are key to the planning and successful implementation of the program, and also conveys

administrator support. Yukel (2014) advises that it is imperative that administrators inform mentoring personnel of what the dynamics involved in mentoring initiatives for successful implementation. Tinto and Presser (2006) assert that institutional investments are needed to enhance student success. Tinto's (1993) concept of institutional commitment should be actively pursued and that student success and persistence is related to the institutions commitment to students.

Bartee II and Bartee (2009) contend that institutional resources develop connections that lead to lifetime relationships. These factors are significant and needed to move African American males towards academic and personal achievement. Administrators should be duty-bound to play an active role to support personnel prior to and along the trajectory of mentoring programs.

As this analysis demonstrates, this study supports the findings of related African American male academic support programs within community colleges and provides evidence that African American males who participate in retention programs are more likely to achieve academic success. Community colleges can utilize this information to address the critical factors related to African American male student success and implement the tools needed to arrange for the conduit needed for persistence and intentionality. This study advances the need and importance of African American male academic mentoring programs.

Recommendations for Further Studies

This study investigated the experiences of current community college mentors and past participants of an African American male community college mentoring program. Additional research is needed to identify the impact that participation has on the development of the academic and social skills applied to achieve success. This study was situated in one of four

campuses offering the same program. Further research is needed to address distinct mentor-mentee interactions of additional campuses.

The crux of research in mentoring has been on mentoring in organizations such as healthcare and vocational occupations. Similarities among higher education, healthcare, vocational apprenticeships, and business have been observed, and the similar factors have all been effective. Various models of successful community college mentoring programs exist but data on the outcomes of such programs is sparse. Further research involving additional subjects may possibly allow for better generalizability. A mixed method research approach with a quantitative aspect could possibly provide evidence that a distinct correlation between academic and social skill development and academic success exists.

All participants communicated an intense appreciation for Jason and the strides that he took to ensure their success. One participant divulged that he paid his tuition and based his success on this fact. Not one of the participants spoke negatively about any of the mentors in this study.

The impact of the lack of formal mentor training was not evaluated in this study. Additional research in this area is needed to examine the difference between mentors who received formal mentor training and those who did not and how one or the other positively or negatively impacted academic outcomes. Additional recommendations for future research include: same race mentoring, same sex mentoring, grade school racism, developmental courses and achieving completion, the effect of the election of President Barack Obama, Black male hopelessness, community college campus discrimination, a case study of a successful mentor, and monetary compensation for faculty involvement.

Lastly, further investigation of the impact of participant relationships and its impact on completion should be evaluated. Participants proposed that future program design should include a college prep program from high school to college, peer to peer mentoring, mentors from various career areas and apprenticeships. In any case, participants attribute academic success to program participation.

Summary

This purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of current African American community college mentors and past participants in an African American male community college mentoring initiative and the influence that this mentoring relationship had on the completion of academic programs. The findings of this study determined that participation in Urban Community College's Bernard Campus African American Male Scholar's mentoring program increased the likelihood that program participants developed the academic and social skills needed to achieve academic success and transfer to a four-year colleges or universities to work towards earning additional degrees.

As a result of this study, community colleges should be duty bound to develop mentoring programs that offer the support that African American males need to overcome the academic and social barriers that have historically thwarted their efforts to enroll in and successfully earn a college degree. Lastly, the overall significance in this study is that it adds to the sparse body of research pertaining to this topic and reiterates the benefits of participation in academic mentoring programs.

References

- 2013/4 Report: Teaching and learning achieves productivity for all.* (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/reports/2013/>
- African American labor force in the recovery: Blacks in the labor force at a glance.* (2011). Retrieved from United States Department of Labor Office of the Secretary: http://www.dol.gov/_sec/media/reports/Blacklaborforce/
- African American males in college in the state of Mississippi.* (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://archive.clarionledger.com/assets/pdf/D0113211719.PDF>
- Alfred, R., Ewell, P., Hudgins, J., & McClenney, K. (1999). *Core indicators of effectiveness for community colleges toward high performance.* Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED426749.pdf>:
- Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., Lovett, M. C., DiPietro, M., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works 7 research based principles for smart teaching.* San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.
- American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities. (2012). *Ethnic and racial disparities in education: Psychology's contributions to understanding and reducing disparities.* Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/ed/resources/racial-disparities.pdf>
- Anderson, Z. (2006, Winter). Why are there fewer African American men in college than African American women? *University of Michigan Research Forum, Issue 3*, 41-44. Retrieved from http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/96970/UMURF-Issue03_2006-ZAnderson.pdf?sequence=1

- Aspirations to achievement: Men of color and community colleges.* (2014). Retrieved from Center For Community College Student Engagement website:
http://www.ccsse.org/docs/MOC_Special_Report.pdf
- Aspirations to achievement: Men of color and community colleges.* (2014). Retrieved from Center For Community College Student Engagement website:
http://www.ccsse.org/docs/MOC_Special_Report.pdf
- Bandura, A. (1994). Self-efficacy. In V.S. Ramachaudran (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of human behavior* (Vol 4, pp. 71-81). New York: Academic Press.
- Bell, E. E. (2010). *Educating African American males*. Retrieved from <http://free-doc-lib.com/book/understanding-african-american-males-ed-bell.pdf>
- Berg, B. L. (2004). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (5th ed.). California State University, Long Beach, CA: Pearson.
- Block, P., Blanchard, K., Wheatley, M., Autry, J. A., & Covey, S. R. (1998). *Insights on leadership: Service, stewardship, spirit and servant leadership*. New York: John Wiley.
- Boggs, R. G. (2010). *Democracy colleges: The evolution of the community college in America*. Retrieved from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu>
- Bonner II, F. A. (2014). *Building on resilience*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.
- Bouie, J. (2013, February 28). More Black men in college than in prison. *The American Prospect*. Retrieved from <http://prospect.org/article/more-Black-men-college-prison>
- Bourke, L., Waite, C., & Wright, J. (2014). Mentoring as a retention strategy to sustain the rural and remote health workforce. *The Australian Journal of Rural Health*, 22, 2-7.

- Brewster, J. (Producer Director), & Stephenson, M. (Producer Director). (2014, February 3.). American promise [Television broadcast]. In D. Cogan, N. London, S. Fifer, & S. Kilmurry (Producer), *American Promise*. Manhattan, NY: Public Broadcasting Service.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. *International Encyclopedia of Education*, 3, 37-43. Retrieved from <http://www.psy.cmu.edu/~siegler/35bronfebrenner94.pdf>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). *Ecological models of human development*. Retrieved from <http://www.psy.cmu.edu/~siegler/35bronfebrenner94.pdf>
- Brown II, M. C., & Bartee, R. D. (2009). *The broken cisterns of African American education: Academic performance and achievement in the post Brown era*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Inc.
- Bush, E. C., & Bush, L. (2005, March 10). Black male achievement and the community college. *Black Issues Higher Education*, 22(2). Retrieved from <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.proxy-iup.klnpa.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=c87b8d10-e39a-4042-aec2-c0e17e17937a%40sessionmgr115&vid=10&hid=126>
- Bush, E. C., & Bush, L. (2005, March 10). Black male achievement and the community college. *Black Issues Higher Education*, 22. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy-iup.klnpa.org/eds/detail/detail?vid=17&sid=dcb39d7f-e546-48a8-9973-6822f8ebfdb8%40sessionmgr4004&hid=4205&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3d#db=eric&AN=EJ711362>
- Chiles, N. (2014). Six ways America's White female teaching force harms Black boys. Retrieved from <http://atlantaBlackstar.com/2014/12/03/6-ways-americas-White-female-teaching-force-harms-Black-boys/>

- Cincinnati State Technical and Community College Black male initiative. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.cincinnati-state.edu/>
- Cleary, M., & Horsfall, J. (2014). Data collection and sampling in qualitative research: does size matter? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 70 (3), 473-475.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/jan.12163>
- Coke, T. E. (2014). How my brother's keeper initiative just might save Black boys. Retrieved from http://www.theroot.com/articles/politics/2014/02/my_brother_s_keeper_initiative_linking_education_and_criminal_justice_could.html
- Comprehensive fact sheet men of color in higher education*. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ccsse.org/docs/MoC_Long_Fact_Sheet.pdf?ts=20150624210027
- Comprehensive fact sheet men of color in higher education. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.ccsse.org/docs/MoC_Long_Fact_Sheet.pdf?ts=20150624210027
- Cook, O. M., Bush, L. V., & Bush, E. C. (2008, August 7). More than gatekeepers. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 25, 19-19. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy-iup.klnpa.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=dcb39d7f-e546-48a8-9973-6822f8ebfdb8%40sessionmgr4004&vid=15&hid=4205>
- Corney, T., & Plessis, K. D. (2010). Apprentices' mentoring relationships: The role of significant others and supportive relationships across the work-life domains. *Youth Studies Australia*, 29 (3), 18-26.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.
- DeNisco, A. (2015). Pride history boost African -American achievement. Retrieved from <http://go.galegroup.com.proxy-iup.klnpa.org/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA410386978&v=2.1&u=indi68545&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w&asid=be0c7a4d1c8c2d2cfe4bba188ed74c74>
- (Ed.). (2013). *Credential completion- %age of cohort that earned a degree, certificate or diploma within three years*. Southwestern Region of Pennsylvania, PA: The Urban Community College (pseudonym).
- Education counts towards the millennium development goals. (2011). Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001902/190214e.pdf>
- Ellis, P. (2004). *Addressing the shame in higher education: Programs that support college enrollment and retention of African American males*. San Francisco, CA: Level Playing Field Institute.
- Erlich, R. J., & Russ-Eft, D. (2011). Applying social cognitive theory to academic advising to assess student learning outcomes. *NACADA Journal*, 31 (2), 5-15. Retrieved from <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.proxy-iup.klnpa.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=8&sid=59c86ab3-b7e4-4459-8148-6caefc544503%40sessionmgr112&hid=122>
- Farkas, G. (2003). Racial disparities and discrimination in education: What do we know, how do we know it, and what do we need to know? *Teachers College Record*, 105 (6), 1119-1146.

- Fast facts: Degrees conferred by sex and race. (2012). Retrieved from
<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=72>
- Feintuch, H. (2010). Black male rising. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com.navigator->
- Feistritzer, C. E. (2011). *Profiles of teachers in the U.S. 2011*. Retrieved from
<http://www.edweek.org/media/pot2011final-blog.pdf>:
<http://www.edweek.org/media/pot2011final-blog.pdf>
- Fischer, M. J. (2007). Settling into campus life: Differences by race/ethnicity in college involvement and outcomes. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 78, 125-161. Retrieved from <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.proxy-iup.klnpa.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=8b4fb345-7d70-4a15-95e9-526b6c04d3b5@sessionmgr111&vid=11&hid=103>
- Foster, K. M. (2004). Coming to terms: A discussion of John Ogbu's cultural- ecological theory of minority academic achievement. *Intercultural Education*, 15, 369-384.
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2004, August 17). The broaden and build theory of positive emotions. *The Royal Society*, 1367-1377. <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1098/rstb.2004.1512>
- Fuller-Rowell, T. E., Burrow, A. L., & Ong, A. D. (2011). Changes in racial identity among African American college students following the election of Barack Obama. *Developmental Psychology*, 47, No. 6, 1608-1618. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0025284>
- Galbraith, M. W., & James, W. B. (2004). Mentoring by the community college professor: One role among many. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 28, 689-701. <http://dx.doi.org/DOI:10.1080/10668920390277073>

- Galbraith, M. W., & Maslin-Ostrowski, P. (2000). *The mentor: Facilitating out-of-class cognitive and affective growth*. In J.L. Bess & Associates, *Teaching alone teaching together* (pp.133-150). San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.
- Garvey, A. J. (2009). The Philosophy and opinions of Marcus Garvey. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 1-63. Retrieved from <http://www.jpanafrican.com/ebooks/eBook%20Phil%20and%20Opinions.pdf>
- Grants for Black women. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.collegegrant.net/grants-for-Black-women/>
- Hall, H. R. (2015). Food for thought: Using critical pedagogy in mentoring African American adolescent males. *The Black World Foundation The Black Scholar*, 45, No.3, 39-53. <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1080/00064246.2015.1049328>
- Hallet, S. (2011). Marriage rates declining for Blacks, less educated: Study. Retrieved from <http://www.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/press/news/news-102011.pdf>
- Harper, S. R. (2012). *Black male student success in higher education: A report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study*. Retrieved from <https://www.gse.upenn.edu/equity/sites/gse.upenn.edu/equity/files/publications/bmss.pdf>
- Harper, S. R., & Davis, III, C. H. (2012, Winter-Spring). They (don't) care about education: A counter narrative on Black male students' responses to inequitable schooling. *Educational Foundations*, 103-119.
- Harper, S. R., & Harris, III, F. (2012, November). Men of color: A role for policymakers in improving the status of Black male students in U.S. higher education. *IHEP Pathways to College Network*, 1-15.

- Harris III, F., & Wood, J. L. (2013). Student success for men of color in community colleges: A review of published literature and research 1998-2012. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 6* No.3, 174-185.
- Henslin, J. M. (2012). *Essentials of sociology: A down to earth approach* (10th ed.). Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville Pearson.
- Higher education is the major force in closing the Black-White income gap. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.jbhe.com/news_views/55_closing_the_income_gap.html
- Hilgendorf, A. E. (2012). Through a limiting lens: Comparing student, parent, and teacher perspectives of African American boys' support for school. *School Community Journal, 22* (2), 111-130. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1001615.pdf>
<http://search.proquest.com.proxy-iup.klnpa.org/docview/196731485?accountid=11652>
- Hughes, R. L., & Howard-Hamilton, M. F. (2003, Winter). Insights emphasizing issues that affect African American women. *New Directions For Student Services, 104*, 95-104.
- Ihekweba, R. H. (2001). *A comparative analysis of African American male and female students' perception of factors related to their persistence at a Texas community college* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304733228?accountid=11652>. (304733228).
- Ihekweba, R. H. (2001). *A comparative analysis of African American male and female student's perception of factors related to their persistence at a Texas community college* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.navigator-iup.passhe.edu/pqdtft/docview/304733228/abstract/13D906232C1111A40BB/1?accountid=11652>

Jacobi, M. (1991). Mentoring and undergraduate academic success: A literature review. *Review of Educational Research*, 61. No.4, 505-532.

The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education. (2013). *Black student college graduation rates remain low, but modest progress begins to show*. Retrieved from http://www.jbhe.com/features/50_Blackstudent_gradrates.html

The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education. (2013). *Black women students far outnumber Black men at the nation's highest ranked universities*. Retrieved from http://www.jbhe.com/news_views/51_gendergap_universities.html

Kahle-Piasecki, L., & Doles, S. (2015). A comparison of mentoring in higher education and Fortune 1000 companies: Practices to apply in a global context. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 15 (5), 74-79.

Karp, M. M., Hughes, K. L., & O'Gara, L. (2008). *An exploration of Tinto's integration framework for community college students* (Community College Research Center No.12). Teacher's College, Columbia University: Community College Research Center.

Kenyatta, C. P. (2012). From perception to practice: How teacher- student interactions affect African American male achievement. *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching and Research*, 8, 36-44. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ979953>

Klein, R. (2014). A majority of students entering school this year are minorities, but most teachers are still White. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/03/student-teacher-demographics_n_5738888.html

LaVant, B. D., Anderson, J. L., & Tiggs, J. W. (1997, Winter 1997). Retaining African American men through mentoring initiatives. *New Directions For Student Services*, 80, 43-52.

- Lester, J. (Ed.). (2008). *Gendered perspectives on community college*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Men of merit initiative. (2013). Retrieved from <https://www.URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE.edu/AAMS.aspx>
- Men of merit initiative. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE.edu/AAMS.aspx>
- Metofe, P. A., Gardiner, C., Walker, A., & Wedlow, W. (2014). The influence of psychological factors on academic performance in African American students: Another case for conscientiousness. *Psychology Journal, 11, No. 2*, 60-67. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy-iup.klnpa.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?nobk=y&sid=0babf05e-208f-4147-a673-7906e9b872fb@sessionmgr4001&vid=27&hid=4111>
- Michael, F. K. (2004, December). Coming to terms: a discussion of John Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory of minority academic achievement. *Intercultural Education, 15*, 369-384. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1467598042000313403>
- Milem, J. F., & Berger, J. B. (1997, Jul/Aug). A modified model of college student persistence: Exploring the relationship between Astin's Theory of Involvement and Tinto's Theory of Student Departure. *Journal of College Student Development, 38*(4), 387-400.
- Miles, J., & Gilbert, P. (2005). *A handbook of research methods for clinical and health psychology*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/med:psych/9780198527565.001.0001>
- Minority male mentoring program. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.mc3.edu/component/content/article/87-about-us/news/8960-wells-fargo-grant-assists-mccc-minority-student-mentoring-program-students>

- Morest, V. S. (2013). *Community college student success*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education.
- Museus, S. D., & Neville, K. M. (2012, May - June). Delineating the ways that key institutional agents provide racial minority students with access to social capital in college. *Journal of College Student Development, 53*, 436-452. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2012.0042>
- Myers, M. (2013). Finding common concerns for children we share. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com/navigator-iup.passhe.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=595f9b54-3dc6-429f-a4e5-5ff948c585c6%40sessionmgr198&hid=122>
- Myers, M. (2013). Finding common concerns for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan, 94*(8), 40-44. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com/navigator-iup.passhe.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=595f9b54-3dc6-429f-a4e5-5ff948c585c6%40sessionmgr198&hid=122>
- Natesan, P., & Kieftenbeld, V. (2012, July 2012). Measuring urban teachers' beliefs about African American students: A psychometric analysis. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 10*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0734282912448243>
- Ong, A. D., Burrow, A. L., & Fuller-Rowell, T. E. (2012, August 20). Positive emotions and the social broadening effects of Barack Obama. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 18*, 424-428. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0029758>
- Pajares, F. (1996, Winter 1996). Self-efficacy beliefs in academic settings. *Review of Educational Research, 66*, 543-578. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/proxy-iup.klnpa.org/stable/1170653?&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). Theories and models of student change in college. In *How college affects students* (2 ed., pp. 53-64). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Patton, S. (2012, November 2). From cellblock to campus, one Black man defies the data. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 59 (10), B9-B13.
- Perry, M. (2012). The college degree gap for Blacks is huge: 2:1. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymarkets.com/economy/2012/05/16the-college-degree-gap-for-Blacks-is-huge-21/>
- Price, H. B. (2002). *Achievement matters: Getting your child the best education possible*. New York, NY: Kensington.
- Ramirez, R. (2012). New research takes aim at stereotype that Black men are not college material. Retrieved from <http://www.nationaljournal.com/thenextamerica/education/new-research-takes-aim-at-sterotype-t...>
- Reid, K. W. (2013). Understanding the relationships among racial identity, self-efficacy, institutional integration and academic achievement of Black males attending research universities. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 82, 75-93. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1419800317?accountid=11652>
- Roberts, M. A. (2009). *African American, European American, or does it makes a difference? Teacher perceptions of care for African American students* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from [http://search.proquest.com.navigator-iup.passhe.edu/docview/305086754?abstract/13E376F2B82170BD4BF/1?accountid=11652.\(305086754\)](http://search.proquest.com.navigator-iup.passhe.edu/docview/305086754?abstract/13E376F2B82170BD4BF/1?accountid=11652.(305086754))
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusions of innovations* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.

- Rogers, E. M. (2004). A prospective and retrospective look at the diffusion model. *Journal of Health Communication, 9*, 13-19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10810730490271449>
- Schmidt, P. (2008). College seek key to success of Black men in classroom. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 55* (7), 1-6. Retrieved from
- Smith, J. A., Estudillo, A. G., & Kang, H. (2010, September 2010). Racial Differences in eighth grade students identification with academics. *Education and Urban Society*.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0013124510379403>
- Spurgeon, S. L., & Myers, J. E. (2010, March). African American male's relationships among racial identity, college type, and wellness. *Journal of Black Studies, 40*, 527-543.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0021934708315153>
- Standard nine: Student support services [Supplemental material]. (n.d.). In (Comp.), *Standard four: Support of the student experience* (p. 9). The Urban Community College (pseudonym)
- Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic minorities*. (2009). Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010015/indicator6_24.asp:
- Strayhorn, T. L., & Terrell, M. C. (2007, Spring/Summer). Mentoring and satisfaction with college for Black students. *The Negro Educational Review, 58*, 69-83.
- Taylor, G. R. (2003). *Practical application of social learning theories in educating African American males*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Taylor, G. R. (2003). *Practical application of social learning theories in educating young African American males*. Lanham, MD: University Press of American Inc.

The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System [Glossary of definitions]. (n.d.). Published instrument. United States: U.S. Department's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

The Urban Community College (pseudonym) Public Relations and Marketing. (2016). A coAAMStment to diversity and inclusion through transformative inclusion. In *At a glance 2016*. [,]. : .

Theodore, C., & Robert, R. B. (2000, Spring 2000). The alarming decline in the academic performance of African American men. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 27, 82-87. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.proxy-iup.klnpa.org/stable/2679017?seq=6#page_scan_tab_contents

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving College rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.

Tinto, V., & Pusser, B. (2006). Moving from theory to action: Building a model of institutional action for student success. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/tinto_pusser_execsumm.pdf

Tsoi-A-Fatt, R. (2010). *We dream a world: The 2025 vision for Black men and boys*. Retrieved from Indiana University of PA: <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED537505>

Urban Prep Academies. (n.d.). <http://www.urbanprep.org/about>

Urban Prep Academies website. (n.d.). <http://www.urbanprep.org/about>

U.S. Department of Education. (2004-2009). *Black student enrollment by sector and control, gender 2003 Beginning postsecondary longitudinal study Powerstats*. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/datalab/powerstats/pdf/bps2009_subject.pdf:

- Walpole, M. B. (2007). Emerging from the pipeline: African American students, socioeconomic status, and college experiences and outcomes. Retrieved from <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11162-007-9079-y#page-1>
- Warde, B. (2008). Staying the course: Narratives of African American males who have completed a baccalaureate degree. *Journal of African American Studies*, 12, 59-72. Retrieved from doi: 10.1007/s12111-007-9031-4
- Wine, J., Janson, N., & Wheelless, S. (2011). *2004-2009 Beginning postsecondary students longitudinal study (BPS: 04/09) full scale methodology report*. Retrieved from: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>
- Wood, J. L. (2012, May-June). From the right to fail to the right to succeed: Black males in community colleges. *About Campus*, 17 (2), 30-32. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/abc.21078>
- Wood, J. L., Newman, C. B., & Harris III, F. (2015). Self-efficacy as a determinant of academic integration: An examination of first-year Black males in the community college. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 39, 3-17. Retrieved from <http://go.galegroup.com.proxy-iup.klnpa.org/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA419267245&v=2.1&u=indi68545&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w&asid=832713d50b3e4bd110fcb236b17d4b14>
- Wood, J. L., & Palmer, R. T. (2014). Academic achievement and the community college: Perspectives of Black male students on the importance of focus. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 32 (1), 141-153. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy-iup.klnpa.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=bb580fa3-0028-48be-a5e7-18f25a43dd51%40sessionmgr4002&vid=4&hid=4202>

- Wood, J. L., & Williams, R. C. (2013). Persistence factors for Black males in the community college: An examination of background, academic, social, and environmental variables. *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men*, 2, 1-28. Retrieved from <http://interwork.sdsu.edu/sp/m2c3/wp-content/blogs.dir/2/files/2012/10/Wood-Williams-2013.pdf>
- Woods, L. C. (2010). *Black male students in the minds of White female teachers: A phenomenological examination of how White female teachers construct their attitudes about Black male students* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://gradworks.umi.com/3448621.pdf>
- Wright, B. L. (2011). I know who I am, do you? Identity and academic achievement of successful African American male adolescents in an urban pilot high school in the United States. *Urban Education*, 46, 611-638. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0042085911400319>
- Yuksel, I. (2014, July 11). Rogers' diffusion of innovation model in action: Individual innovativeness profiles of pre-service teachers in Turkey. *Croatian Journal of Education*, 17- 2, 507-523. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15516/cje.v17i2.871>

Appendix A

Past MMI Participant Demographic Survey

(Please respond to the questions below and bring this page to your interview session.)

1. Age (Circle One)

- a. 18-24
- b. 25-34
- c. 35-44
- d. 45-54
- e. 55-64
- f. 65+

2. State your program completion type (Circle one: certificate, degree, or diploma) and in what academic area: _____

3. When did you complete your program of study (Month/Year)? _____

4. Are you currently enrolled at a four-year college or university? Circle one: a. Yes b. No

If yes, where? _____

If no, where are you employed or pursuing other educational goals _____

5. Did you attend a college or university prior to enrolling at UCC? Circle one: a. Yes b. No If so, where? _____

6. Did either or both of your parents attend or graduate from college? a. Yes b. No

If yes, did this apply to your mother, father or both? _____

Appendix B

Current MMI Mentors Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Describe your personal educational journey from grade school to college completion.
2. What is your definition of mentoring?
3. Tell me about your history of mentoring and of being mentored, as applicable.
4. How did you become involved with mentoring African American men at UCC and what are your responsibilities in helping these men achieve community college completion?
5. Describe your training or preparation as a formal mentor in the MMI program and explain how it or other factors may have contributed to the formation of your personal mentoring style?
6. Describe the need you see in mentoring African American males in succeeding academically and in other areas.
7. Describe your personal philosophy in supporting, motivating and/or empowering AA male students.
8. Tell me about the greatest joys you experience in mentoring AA men at the community college level. The most challenging aspects?
9. Describe an ideal program at the college or university level designed to mentor AA males in completing their chosen programs of study.
10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about mentoring in general or being a mentor in the MMI program?

Appendix C

Past MMI Participants Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. What are your educational goals?
2. What is your definition of mentoring?
3. How did you learn that UCC had a mentoring program aimed at helping African American males achieve completion of their programs of study and what was your reaction to discovering this offering?
4. Describe any formal or informal mentoring experiences you had prior to attending UCC?
5. What mentoring networking activities were you involved in at UCC and what were your perceptions about participating in these?
6. To what degree of importance was it that you had a mentor of the same race as you?
7. In what ways did your mentor help you overcome academic or personal obstacles and ultimately completion of your program of study?
8. Describe any perceived benefits or disadvantages of being part a program that focused on mentoring African American males toward program of study completion?
9. In what other ways did UCC demonstrate they cared that you completed your program of study?
10. What factors, besides participation in a mentoring program for African American males, do you believe contributed to your program completion?
11. How important is it to you to see other African American males succeed? Can you give examples?
12. What was the best part about participating in a mentoring initiative for African American male program of study completion? The most challenging part?
13. Describe an ideal program at the college or university level designed to mentor African American males.
14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about mentoring in general or being mentored at UCC?

Appendix D

Interview Question Research Matrix: Mentors

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
2	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Appendix E

Interview Question Research Matrix: Past Student Participants

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
2	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13