

2015

The Perception of Black Male Students of Black Faculty/Staff Involvement in Mentorship at a Predominantly White Institution

B. James Griffin Jr.

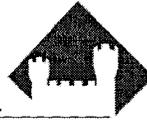
This research is a product of the graduate program in [College Student Affairs](#) at Eastern Illinois University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

Recommended Citation

Griffin, B. James Jr., "The Perception of Black Male Students of Black Faculty/Staff Involvement in Mentorship at a Predominantly White Institution" (2015). *Masters Theses*. 2081.
<https://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/2081>

This is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

The Graduate School



EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Thesis Maintenance and Reproduction Certificate

FOR: Graduate Candidates Completing Theses in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree
Graduate Faculty Advisors Directing the Theses

RE: Preservation, Reproduction, and Distribution of Thesis Research

Preserving, reproducing, and distributing thesis research is an important part of Booth Library's responsibility to provide access to scholarship. In order to further this goal, Booth Library makes all graduate theses completed as part of a degree program at Eastern Illinois University available for personal study, research, and other not-for-profit educational purposes. Under 17 U.S.C. § 108, the library may reproduce and distribute a copy without infringing on copyright; however, professional courtesy dictates that permission be requested from the author before doing so.

Your signatures affirm the following:

- The graduate candidate is the author of this thesis.
- The graduate candidate retains the copyright and intellectual property rights associated with the original research, creative activity, and intellectual or artistic content of the thesis.
- The graduate candidate certifies her/his compliance with federal copyright law (Title 17 of the U. S. Code) and her/his right to authorize reproduction and distribution of all copyrighted materials included in this thesis.
- The graduate candidate in consultation with the faculty advisor grants Booth Library the non-exclusive, perpetual right to make copies of the thesis freely and publicly available without restriction, by means of any current or successive technology, including by not limited to photocopying, microfilm, digitization, or internet.
- The graduate candidate acknowledges that by depositing her/his thesis with Booth Library, her/his work is available for viewing by the public and may be borrowed through the library's circulation and interlibrary loan departments, or accessed electronically.
- The graduate candidate waives the confidentiality provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U. S. C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) with respect to the contents of the thesis and with respect to information concerning authorship of the thesis, including name and status as a student at Eastern Illinois University.

I have conferred with my graduate faculty advisor. My signature below indicates that I have read and agree with the above statements, and hereby give my permission to allow Booth Library to reproduce and distribute my thesis. My adviser's signature indicates concurrence to reproduce and distribute the thesis.

[Redacted Signature]

Printed Name

College Student Affairs

Graduate Degree Program

Fac

Prin

Date

7-10-15

Please submit in duplicate.

The Perception of Black Male Students of Black Faculty/Staff
Involvement in Mentorship at a Predominantly White Institution

(TITLE)

BY

B. James Griffin, Jr.

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

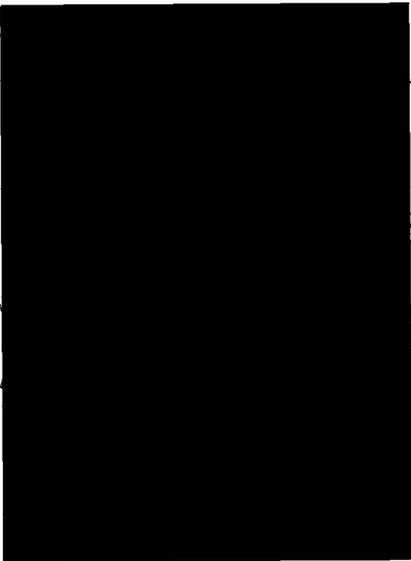
Master of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2015

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE



1/30/15

DATE



DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL CHAIR
OR CHAIR'S DESIGNEE

2-10-15

DATE

20/15

DATE

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

DATE

6-30-15

DATE

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

DATE

The Perception of Black Male Students of Black Faculty/Staff Involvement in
Mentorship at a Predominantly White Institution

B. James Griffin

Eastern Illinois University

This thesis is dedicated to the Black young men I work with every day in an effort to change the negative dialogue of Black males in higher education. This thesis is for groups like S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring & Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. who are working to improve the state of the Black male. Onward & Upward.

Abstract

This research study explored the perception African American men had of mentorship, its value to their education and the effects it had on their college success at a predominantly White institution. The study further focused on the impact mentorship had on the student when the mentor was of a different race versus the same race of the student. The research was guided by the following questions: (1) What is the value of mentorships related to attending a higher education institution, (2) What factors lead Black male students to seek mentorships, (3) What are the perceived differences between mentorship with cross-race faculty/staff and Black male faculty/staff, and (4) What is the Black males' perception of the role of mentorship to their success?

From each research question posed several themes emerged: guidance, growth, acceptance, retention, feeling unsupported, sense of belonging, barriers such as uncomfortableness, white faculty/staff reticence, stereotypes, and lastly mentorship roles that bridge the gap and provide encouragement and company. Research revealed that students perceived mentoring to be of great value to their college experience. Although not mutually exclusive, it was also determined that having access to Black faculty/staff also played a major role in the student's retention and satisfaction at the PWI. Even though all of the participants interviewed expressed feeling comfortable with White faculty/staff, they also identified barriers to seeking mentorship. Feelings of segregation, being stereotyped, and judged led these students to seek mentorship with Black faculty/staff who they believed could identify with their strife and provide them with encouragement to overcome these obstacles. Recommendations include developing multicultural competency programming for faculty/staff to properly address the needs of

Black male students, providing comfortable spaces for Black males to express and address their feelings, and the hiring of more Black faculty/staff to assist in their development and serve as role models.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	i
ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
I. INTRODUCTION	
Introduction	1
Purpose of the Study	4
Research Questions	4
Significance of Study	4
Limitations	5
Definition of Terms	6
Content Summary	7
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
Introduction	9
Black Males in Higher Education	9
Black Males at Historically Black Colleges and Universities	10
Black Males at Predominantly White Institutions	12
Mentorship	14
Cross-race mentoring	16
Black mentors with Black Mentees	18
Summary	19

III. METHODOLOGY	
Design of Study	21
Research Site	22
Procedure	22
Instrumentation	23
Participants	23
Individual Student Profile	23
Researcher	25
Data Collection	26
Treatment of Data	26
Data Analysis	27
IV. RESULTS	
Results	28
Sample Population	28
Data	29
<i>Research Question 1</i>	29
<i>Research Question 2</i>	32
<i>Research Question 3</i>	36
<i>Research Question 4</i>	41
V. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION	
Discussion	47
Summary of Findings	48
Implications of the Research	59

College Student Affairs Professionals	61
Future Research	61
Summary	62
REFERENCES	64
APPENDICES	70
Appendix A: Letter of Consent	71
Appendix B: Interview Protocols	74
Appendix C: Request for Participation	77

Chapter I

Introduction

It is often said that people imitate what they most admire in others. As children, we grow up admiring our parents, older siblings, and the people we see in the media. This too holds true for Black males; in the Black community positive Black male representation is limited. According to Allen, Bonous-Hammarth, Epps, Guillory and Suh (2000), the lack of positive Black male representation is especially common in Higher Education. If our parents are who we look up to for our depiction of the Black male, our depiction is skewed as an overwhelming percentage of fathers are absent from the household and approximately 50% of those who remain have a bachelor's degree or higher (Patton, 2012). If our older siblings are who we follow, our perception of the Black male is distorted as Black male enrollment in college is made up of only 4.3% of total enrollment at four year universities in the United States (Maramba & Palmer, 2010). If the media is who we turn to for accurate portrayals of Black males, those too are distorted as the media portrays the Black male as being aggressive, a "thug", criminal and/or uneducated. Maramba and Palmer stated that the media rarely exposes the public to positive Black males, instead they disproportionately represent them in an overtly negative and stereotypical manner. This type of discrimination and negativity toward the Black male has direct implications that affect their performance in higher education.

Jenkins (2006) contested that the strife of the Black male in higher education is formed by factors that exist prior to them entering the institution. Blacks have a history of oppression and segregation in the United States dating as far back as 1641 which has had lasting effects on their progression through life. Jenkins (2006) stated "a lifestyle of

disenfranchisement did not just happen upon African American people, but was instead intentionally ingrained in the very structure of America” (p. 130). The identity of the Black male has long been defined by the majority group in society and the media which has used its power to portray Black men as inferior (Jenkins, 2006; Noguera, 1997). During slavery the Black male was removed from the family unit (Jenkins, 2006) and punished publicly by White slave masters in an effort to show domination and control (Noguera, 1997). These same practices are subtly perpetuated today and approximately 44% of Black families do not have the father or a male figure present in the household (Shah & Sato, 2012).

Without positive male role models in the home, Black males use media to define their identity (Jenkins, 2006). As it is rare to find depictions of Black males being role models, community leaders, entrepreneurs or professors in the media (Maramba & Palmer, 2010), the media’s contribution to the dissemination of negative images to society further distorts the character of the Black male. These stereotypical images portrayed often create a false perception of the Black male and dictate how others work with and view them (Maramba & Palmer, 2010). These factors play a substantial role in the development of the Black male’s self-efficacy and sense of self (Jenkins, 2006). Psychologically these factors hinder Black males and affects the way they interact within society. As a result of such isolation and defamation, Black males are noticeably overly represented in unattractive statistical rates for incarceration and homicides (Ceja, Solorzano & Yosso, 2000; Noguera, 1997). These issues however, are not contained to the community but are also prevalent in the education system as well.

Just as Black males are overly represented in unfavorable statistics in society, they are also overly represented in negative statistics within the education system starting in elementary school. According to Noguera (1997), Black males are overwhelming labeled as unintelligent, troublesome and are more likely to be punished for minor violations while in school. Jenkins (2006) believed that these Black males are struggling in and outside of the classroom because of the history of oppression, faulty family structures and racial frustration they face daily. Black males are just as marginalized inside the classroom as they are outside of the classroom and, as a result become disengaged in the educational process (Holbert-Quince, Lacey, Owens, Rawls, 2010; Maramba and Palmer, 2010). This negative psychological mind frame of society and education manifest in Black males over time and can either be changed or solidified while in the educational system (Jenkins, 2006). Noguera's (2013) study of Black males found that there is a discrepancy in what Black males say and believe about the need for higher education. He stated that black males do not believe that an education will lead to a better life which explains why their academic success, retention rates, and graduation rates are low. Smith and Zhang (2011) stated that research points to parents as being major factors in their successful transition from high school to college but found that in the Black community students are generally the first in their family to attend college. Harper (2012) agreed, stating that it is the family's responsibility to promote higher education from an early stage; regardless of the parent's educational past, providing Black males with access to positive role models and statistics of Black male accomplishments is important for them to value and be successful in college. Smith and Zhang (2011), however, contended that this is not taking place, instead the father, when

in the child's life, did not encourage the student and was unable to assist in the student's course work or academic success. These facts are alarming and support the need for mentoring of Black males in higher education to supplement the inattention they had received prior to entering the institution.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the Black male's perception of the value of mentorship related to their experience at a higher education institution. Additionally, this study sought to explore the perceptions of Black males who actually sought mentoring relationships at a predominantly White institution (PWI). Black males who attend PWI's have very few role models of color at the university and may be forced to seek cross-race mentoring. Qualitative research was used to approach this subject and ultimately answer the researcher's research questions.

Research Questions

The proposed research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What is the value of mentorship related to attending a higher education institution?
2. What factors lead Black male students to seek mentorships?
3. What are the perceived differences between mentorship with cross-race faculty/staff and Black male faculty/staff?
4. What is the Black males' perception of the role of mentorship to their success?

Significance of Study

The successful matriculation of Black males through higher education has been a concern for higher education professionals for decades (Atkinson & Grant-Thompson,

1997). Although the number of Black males entering college is growing, their retention and completion rates are not. This is supported by a finding from Davis, Maramba and Palmer (2010) who asserted that Black males account for 5% of the enrollment in higher education and this percentage has not changed since 1976. Black male representation at four year institutions is disproportionately low when compared to females and Caucasian students (Cuyjet, 1997). This is true for both Black male students and Black male faculty and staff. Black males who attend PWI's have very few role models of color at the university and may seek cross-race mentoring as a result. This fact poses a problem as African American students need to be able to identify role models who promote academic excellence and self-confidence (Atkinson & Grant-Thompson, 1997). According to (Allen, Bonous-Hammarth, Epps, Guillory, & Suh, 2000) Black professors make up only 4% of professors in America and even fewer of them are Black males which is considerably detrimental to the success of Black male students and their matriculation through to graduate and professional programs.

Limitations

A number of potential limitations have been identified. One limitation may be the lack of participation by the Black male senior class. Another limitation will be with the method used to collect data. Because the method chosen is qualitative the findings cannot be generalized (Krefting, 1991) to the entire Black male student body. Solicitation of participants and getting responses from willing participants in a timely manner can prove difficult during the study. Selecting participants may also serve as a hindrance in this study as two sets of participants are needed, those who receive

mentoring and those that do not. The researchers close ties with the university and work with Black males on campus may also serve as a limitation.

Definition of Terms

Acting White. An act of behaving in a way that would be closely associated with being White. Such as academic success or speaking proper English (Ogbu, 2004).

Black Male. Americans born in the United States who may or may not be able to trace their lineage to an African racial group. This term can be interchangeable with the term “African American” for the sake of this study.

Cool Pose. The presentation of self many Black males use to establish their male identity. A ritual form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing impression management and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single, critical message, pride, strength, and control (Majors & Billson, 1992).

Cross-Race Mentoring. Mentoring that occurs when diverse race/cultures serve as mentors to students of another race/culture (Lewis, Hagood-Elliot, Seepersad, & Strickland, 2007)

First Generation. An individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree or in the case of the any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree (Federal TRIO Programs: Department of Education, 1998)

Graduate Student. A person who has earned a degree or diploma from a school, college, or university and is now pursuing a master/doctoral level degree.

Historically Black College & University (HBCU). Accredited institutions established prior to 1964 whose principal mission was, and is, the education of Black Americans (Bettez & Suggs, 2012).

Mentoring. A complex, interactive process, occurring between individuals of differing level of experience and expertise that incorporates interpersonal or psychological development, career, and/or educational development, and socialization functions into the relationship (Reio & Robinson, 2011)

Mentor. Someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person (Merriam-Webster, 2013)

Mentee/Protégé. One who is being mentored (Merriam-Webster, 2013)

Onlyness. The psychoemotional burden of having to strategically navigate a racially politicized space occupied by few peers, role models, and guardians from one's same racial or ethnic group (Harper, 2012)

Senior. A degree seeking student enrolled full time at a College or University with at least 90 credit hours towards graduation.

Success. The correct or desired result of an attempt (Merriam-Webster, 2013)

Content Summary

This study focused on the perception of Black male students at a PWI on mentoring. An in-depth analysis was conducted of their ideas surrounding the current values of mentoring and what role the Black male faculty plays in mentoring and their success. Chapter 1 has given insight into the problem and some detailed into the significance of this study. Chapter 2 provides a more detailed depiction of the issue. It goes deeper into what the literature has said about Black males in Higher Education and

focus on their need of mentoring. It attempts to compare outside practices that has proven to be beneficial to the successful matriculation of Black males through college to graduation. Chapter 3 gives the reader the researcher's design of study, instrument of use, collection of evidence, and target population. This detailed explanation tries to assure the highest reliability and credibility of the expected findings.

Chapter II

Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the factors impacting the state of the Black male in higher education. A review of literature focuses on the topics of 1) Black males in Higher Education, 2) Mentoring, and 3) Cross-race mentoring to review the impact it has on Black male involvement in mentoring. The review of research is used to compare the current state of Black male faculty representation in higher education with the perceived need for the Black male representation to facilitate the success of Black male students in Higher Education at predominantly White institutions.

Black Males in Higher Education

Black males in higher education have faced a range of obstacles and, as a result, lag behind their Caucasian counterparts. These obstacles can be summarized as a threatening academic environment, inaccurate perceptions of Black males by others in Higher Education and a defeatist mindset of Black male students (Cuyjet, 1997). Maramba and Palmer (2010) asserted that compared to their female and male counterparts, regardless of race/ethnicity, Black male students are not being retained through graduation. Of all the races Black males lag furthest behind their female counterparts (Harper, 2012). Harper (2012) found that over a 30 year period Black males have only increased their graduation rates by 109%, while Black females have increased their rate by more than 250%. This statistic is unchanged through all levels of higher education from associates to doctoral degree.

Only 35.2% of Black males were retained and graduated within six years according to a 2005 study by (Digest of Education Statistics, 2012). Likewise, further

research stated that of the 4% of Black males pursuing a degree in higher education, 67% do not complete it (Nealy, 2005). Although Black males only comprise 4% of college students, they are often overly represented in collegiate athletics, primarily football and basketball (Harper, 2012). It can be concluded that there is a cause for concern given the low graduation rate for this population of students.

Previous researchers have found factors influencing this phenomenon. Maramba and Palmer (2010) insisted that the current education system is unequal and unjust and was not designed in the interest of the underrepresented student. They further indicated that the critical theory in education is based around making the minority group more like the dominant group. Black males entering higher education also suffer from low self-esteem, are ill prepared by high school to successfully transition to Higher Education, are first generation students, have a history of oppression, and have negative stereotypes placed on them by social media (Jenkins, 2006). Black males are entering higher education with an illiteracy rate of 44%, placing them at a disadvantage when attempting college level work. According to Jenkins (2006) these issues further segregate Black males from their peers and the university as well as perpetuates the negative ideology that Black males have about their worth.

black males at historically black colleges and universities. The successes of Black students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are vastly different than that of Black males at predominantly White Institution. HBCUs were first established in 1837 in an effort to afford Blacks educational opportunities not previously available to them at historically White institutions at that time (Bettez & Suggs, 2012). These institutions provided first generation, low income and historically underrepresented

groups access to higher education. Underprepared students at HBCU's are able to excel because students receive both secondary and college education while in attendance which improves their academic deficiency (Conrad & Kim, 2006; Fleming, 1976; Gasman & Palmer, 2008). HBCU campuses provided Black students with a hospitable campus climate that was free of racism and alienation (Allen, 1992; Atkinson & Grant-Thompson, 1997; Gasman & Palmer, 2008). Today, these same circumstances leave students with a higher level of satisfaction that can be attributed to the nurturing and supportive atmosphere that a HBCU provide the students (Fries-Britt and Turner, 2002; Gasman and Palmer, 2008; Harris, 1999). The welcoming environment stems from HBCU's obligation to the Black community to develop the student as a whole and to develop the student ethically, morally and spiritually (Jett, 2013). Allen (1992) argued the following:

The supportive environments of historically Black colleges communicate to Black students that it is safe to take the risks associated with intellectual growth and development. Such environments also have more people who provide Black students with positive feedback, support, and understanding, and who communicate that they care about the students' welfare (p. 40).

More recently, Davis, Maramba and Palmer (2010) identified that having Black professors and student affairs personnel who inspire and encourage students to maximize their potential contributed to their academic achievement. Academic achievement is highest on HBCU campuses where supportive relationships are established between faculty/staff and students whereas students at PWI's have reported lower academic achievement (Allen, 1992; Strayhorn, 2008). A study conducted by Davis et al. (2010)

interviewed Black males attending a historically Black college and university on their feelings about racial homogeneity, the HBCU community and the impact those factors had on their success in higher education. Davis found that the racial homogeneity of the institution played a major part in stimulating the desire to excel academically. Black males felt that they thrived in environments of like-minded individuals striving for common goals. It serves as motivation to have access to and be able to interact with other Black students. The participants of the study stated that the combination of the institutions racial composition, peers, role models, and faculty are valuable in their persistence to graduation (Davis, Maramba, & Palmer, 2010). Furthermore, Black students generally report having higher Afrocentric values when attending HBCU's which contributed to lowering the stresses associated with being an underrepresented group in America (Brittian, Sy, & Stokes, 2008). Davis and Brown III (2001) summarized the positive effects of HBCUs on their student population as follows: "Black colleges enrich the academy, add to the national scholarship, and create atmospheres that epitomize the best of society" (47).

black males at predominantly white institutions (PWI's). Black males at predominantly White institutions have an abundance of factors working against their success in higher education. Aside from the statistics showing the lack of representation of Black male role models at PWI's (Cuyjet, 2007; Maramba and Palmer, 2010), Black males also face other issues such as an unsupportive environment and stereotyping. Universities have an obligation to provide an environment conducive to learning and for Black students in general this means feeling engaged, connected, accepted, encouraged and supported. According to Allen (1992), Black students at PWIs feel alienated, racially

discriminated and segregated. This negative environment plays a substantial role in hindering a student's success. Since 87.1% of Black undergraduates attend a PWI (Rodgers & Summers, 2008) this is an area of concern. To further detail the experience of Black males at PWIs, Rodgers and Summers found evidence to support the factors previously mentioned that contribute to Black males' low graduation and retention rates in higher education. In the study they found that Black males felt that the campus was hostile toward them and was not inclusive but rather exclusive. In addition to the environmental factor, the stereotypes attached to these young men do not assist them in their matriculation through college. Black males are often marginalized by the school system and likely to be labeled as disabled, insubordinate and unintelligent (Noguera, 2003). Black males are forced to combat the perceptions that society has placed on them as well as the ones that they have been trained to believe about themselves and their abilities (Rodgers & Summers, 2008).

Black males on predominantly White campuses are often plagued with either being "invisible" or being the token Black male in an organization or leadership role (Cuyjet, 2006). Due to the combination of low enrollment rates of Black males and institution's quest to raise diversity, Black males become the spokesperson for their entire race within the classroom (Brittian, Sy, & Stokes, 2008). This theory is described as "onlyness" in the research by Harper (2012) whereas the student is expected to serve as the ambassador for people of color. According to Cuyjet, when placed in the token position these students have the added pressure of combating the negative images their peers, faculty and staff associate with Black males through false media coverage. These Black males can take one of two roles as a result. They can either take on a "cool pose"

or they can conform and begin “acting White.” For most Black students they take on a “cool pose” as a defense mechanism to being the only of their race in many instances at a PWI (Cuyjet, 2006). The idea of the “cool pose” was developed by Majors and Billson (1992) and is described as a coping mechanism in which the Black males elude daily dangers by constructing a facade that exude power and fearlessness while often coming off as standoffish. This façade has now placed these students into an environment where they are uncomfortable and therefore cannot thrive personally or academically. And those who are thriving academically are bombarded with the title of “acting white”, as being educated has long been associated with White privilege (Brittian, Sy, & Stokes, 2008). Harper (2012) found that regardless of whether a Black student is excelling or failing academically, they are faced with racial tension and must defend their right to be at the institution. Ogbu (2004) examined the theme of Black students “acting White” and found that Black students performed worse in school when peer pressured not to “act White.”

Mentorship

Mentoring is an effective way of engaging individuals and guiding them down successful paths. Students who develop relationships with faculty have a significantly higher GPA during their college career regardless of race (Kim, 2010). Mentors can come from anywhere however, in the Black community; they are not coming from the home. According to Strayhorn (2008), an alarming rate of Black parents do not have a college degree and are unable to support or identify with their child who is pursuing a degree in higher education. As a result of this lack of support, these Black students could be lost in an institution that cannot identify with them and their special needs, hence the importance

of mentoring at 4-year institutions. Mentoring gives students access to an experienced professional who provides them with support, resources and feedback regarding a variety of issues they may encounter (Reio & Robinson, 2011). Through working with a mentee, the mentor is able to provide them with knowledge pertaining to their area of concern such as life, study skills, careers and give them insight that will ultimately enhance their preparedness. Although Reio and Robinson focused on the mentoring of African American men in the workforce, the results may be transferable to Black males in higher education. They found that there is a positive relationship between having a mentor and job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The results of the study indicated that mentoring was a factor and the mentored was more likely to be satisfied with their job ($\beta < 0.05$) and led to a commitment to the organization ($\beta < 0.001$).

An important facet of the mentoring experience is that the mentor must be able to inspire the mentee. According to Lincoln and Stanley (2005), the mentor must draw on the mentee's strengths and weaknesses, be able to address their specific needs, and nurture the mentee in a way that they capitalize on their skills and grow as an individual. As a result of mentoring and support of the faculty and staff and the resources they provide, an environment is created that promote academic success (Noguera, *The trouble with Black boys: the role and influence of environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African American males*, 2003). The act of mentoring is crucial for preparing students for post-secondary education and has strong ties to their academic success while in school (Thomas, Willis, & Davis, 2007). The fact that Black males specifically perform better when their teacher encourages them and provides them with additional support implies that having a mentor would benefit students substantially.

To further understand the need for mentoring and faculty involvement, Noguera maintained that students need to believe that they are cared about and that a strong concern about their performance is needed for them to succeed. He concluded that “throwing money” at the current issue with Black males is not the solution to the problem. Black male’s academic success is molded by their attitudes toward education which is a product of their culture. This finding makes a vital connection between the need of mentoring and furthermore, the need for mentors that can culturally identify with Black male students and a viable method of retaining and graduating these students at acceptable rates.

cross-race mentoring. Like counseling, mentoring requires an understanding of one’s cultural experiences and differences to thoroughly address the mentee’s needs and assist them. The mentor-mentee relationship has to be built over a period of time by willing participants who understand each other’s viewpoint and have an admiration for each other (Harris, 1999). The mentoring relationships must also be genuine and have an established level of trust. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2002) stated that White mentors may have difficulty building trust with Black mentees as Blacks have little reason to trust Whites given the history of discrimination, oppression, and violence towards them by White Americans. Dahlvig (2010) contended that to breakdown these barriers mentors must have productive and open conversations but in order to do that the mentors need to have cultural competence and knowledge. White faculty and staff may have difficulty working with individuals outside of their race as they may lack understanding of the educational experiences of minority students (Barker, 2011; Thomas, Willis, Davis, 2007). Mentors who come from different backgrounds than their mentee may not

properly be able to identify with their special needs and assist them in a manner that would be the most effective. On the contrary, Pomales, Claiborn, and LaFromboise (1986) found that regardless of race or ethnicity Black students sought mentorship from faculty who are culturally competent and aware. They also suggested that when White mentors ignored racial context and insisted on being “colorblind,” the mentor loses credibility.

Within cross-race mentoring there may be a divide between White mentors and Black mentees due to the idea of the “haves” and the “have-nots” which can emerge from misunderstandings based on ones perception of the others culture (Lewis, Hagood-Elliot, Seepersad, & Strickland, 2007). Cultural and racial misconceptions, biases and taboos can interfere with mentoring when they are not built on solid foundations. Lewis et al. (2007) noted that the perception on inferiority associated with perceived social standings of the mentor can further segregate the mentor and mentee. The same can be said about the White mentor’s false perception of the mentee; inaccurately assuming the mentee is first generation or low income because of social and cultural differences. Thomas et al. (2007) insisted that White mentors participating in cross race mentoring are often faced with anxiety when working with Black students due to their inexperience with diversity and discomfort with racial issues. This disconnect between White mentors and Black mentees led Barker (2011) to contend that faculty usually chooses mentees or protégés that remind them of themselves, which would abandon the needs of minority students. There are benefits to cross-race mentoring, however these benefits reside with the faculty mentors partaking in mentorship (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2002; Thomas, Willis, & Davis, 2007).

Successful cross-race mentoring requires both mentor and mentee being open to diversity. They cannot be afraid to address racial issues while maintaining the mentees individuality (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2002). Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2002) found that “mentors naturally seeks to recreate their protégé in their own image” (p. 21), however, it is this fact that Black mentees oppose and therefore, view cross race mentoring as an opportunity for White mentors to help them to assimilate to their way of thinking (Thomas, Willis, & Davis, 2007).

black mentors with black mentees. Mentoring, although important in and of itself, it is even more advantageous for Black males when paired with mentors of similar race and gender. The quality of the mentoring and its perceived contribution to the mentee and the organization is increased when this factor is examined (Reio & Robinson, 2011). The mentoring of Black males by other Black males is crucial in the success of the Black male in higher education as access to positive role models contribute to the learning environment (Davis, Maramba, & Palmer, 2010). A study by Allen et al. (2000) supported this finding saying that the absence of Black faculty and staff actually has a direct effect on the completion rates of Black males not only in graduate programs but also professional programs. Students who do not have access to Black faculty and staff associate being educated as “acting white” (Brittian, Sy, & Stokes, 2008). Black students need to be able to identify and have access to Black faculty and staff in leadership roles who endorse education. Brittian et al. (2008) stated that Black led mentoring programs create a comfortable environment that promote pride in the Afro-centric culture and in return increases retention among Black students. The creation of comfortable environments or “counterspaces”, as described in the study by Grier-Reed (2010), allows

students the opportunity to cope with the stresses, cultural conflicts, and racism that they may receive on a weekly basis. Students who have a safe place to vocalize their concerns and vent their aggression adjusted better to the campus and even had higher grade point averages than those who did not (Arriola and Powell, 2003; Cancelli, Ponterotto, Reynolds, and Utsey, 2000; Ceja, Solorzano, and Yosso, 2000; Grier-Reed, 2010). Grier-Reed (2010) focused their study on the program African American Student Network (AFAM) at the University of Minnesota, which creates a counterspace for Black undergraduate students to engage intellectually, socially and personally with Black faculty, staff and graduate students. The program allowed the students to build strong relationships with the Black faculty and staff that resulted in the students finding alternative coping mechanism to combat the negativity they experienced on the campus.

Universities such as Carnegie have a higher enrollment, retention and graduation rate of Black males because the institution has successfully responded to the needs of their Black students. The professors at this university must participate in the mentoring and counseling of their students. Furthermore, the Black faculty feel obligated to mentor Black students given the unjust history of society toward these students. This case is an example of the benefits incurred by Black students having had access to and the corporation of Black faculty and staff in mentorship to help facilitate their success in higher education. The inclusion of Black faculty on campuses helps in the retention and success of Black students because students perceive Black faculty as being more accessible and easier to connect with (Tuitt, 2012). According to Tuitt (2012), the addition of Black faculty raises the bar for Black students and serves as welcomed role models and intellectual guides.

Summary

The research presented has examined the experiences of Black males at predominantly White institutions and those of Black males attending historically Black colleges and universities. The literature supports the need for more Black faculty and staff at predominantly White institutions. The need for Black role models who can mentor these Black male students and help them develop a more positive image of themselves, not taught in many cases prior to this point in their lives, is necessary to increase retention and graduation rates. Historically Black colleges and universities yield higher graduation rates, retention rates and grade point averages when it comes to Black students because they emphasize an environment conducive to Black students' learning. The atmosphere at HBCUs differs from that of a PWI in that it supports, nurtures and encourages its Black students to excel. The challenges that Black students face at PWIs are often times hostile which becomes detrimental to their success and offers little to no way for these students to deal with the issues they face on a daily basis.

Chapter III

Methodology

Design of Study

A qualitative research approach was used to analyze the perceptions of Black males on the importance of mentoring by Black faculty/staff. These results will be used to understand the mindset of Black male students about mentoring and determine what factors lead them to seek mentoring or not seeking mentorship. This qualitative research was applied to Black males at predominantly White institutions at a mid-size university in the Midwest. Because the perception and access to resources of other individuals from diverse backgrounds may differ from those participating in this study, a qualitative study was the best approach as qualitative research is not meant to be applicable and generalized to other individuals. The following questions guided the research:

1. What is the value of mentorships related to attending a higher education institution?
2. What factors lead Black male students to seek mentorships?
3. What are the perceived differences between mentorship with cross-race faculty/staff and Black male faculty/staff?
4. What is the Black males' perception of the role of mentorship to their success?

These questions provided me with the content to draw a conclusion on and provide recommendations for addressing the need for proper mentorship for Black males at PWI's.

Research Site

Research was conducted on the campus of a predominantly White four-year institution in a rural community in the Midwest of the United States. The university has reported undergraduate and graduate enrollment of 8,913 students in fall 2014. Of those 8,913 students 1,500 of them identify as Black or African American. According to the Office of Minority Affairs 558 Black males attended the university in fall 2014 and 163 were classified as having more than 90 credit hours. The interviews were done in an isolated location free from distractions and interruptions. The location was consistent for each participant.

Procedure

The researcher emailed Black males with 90 credit hours or more after obtaining a list during the time of study from the Office of Minority Affairs. An email was then sent out requesting participation from all the males meeting the aforementioned qualifications. From those the pool of potential participants who responded the researcher selected five individuals from the midsize Midwestern institution in which to conducted interviews. Those individuals interviewed were required to sign a consent to participate form which guaranteed their confidentiality by the use of pseudonym prior to beginning the interview process. Interviews were video recorded for accuracy then used to transcribe the participant's words. Each interview lasted approximately 25 minutes which included both the prepared questions and prompts associated with responses of the interviewees. The interviewees were then given the opportunity to review their transcripts for accuracy.

Instrumentation

To gather data for this research, the researcher served as the interviewer of the student participant therefore served as the instrument. An in-depth interview was utilized to gain the participant's personal experiences at the PWI, perception of their environment, and factors that have contributed to their perception of mentors. Questions were organized by open ended questions guided by the four research questions. A brief demographic questionnaire was also given to participants to gather some background information to use in the study.

Participants

The target population for this this study was Black males at a midsize predominantly White public institution in the Midwest. The institution has a population of 163 Black males with 90 or more credit hours that was the focus of this study as they have had the opportunity to receive and/or seek mentoring. Participation came from Black males who have received mentorship and those who have not in an attempt to get a holistic perspective to the perception of mentoring. To be involved in this study the participants identify as all of the following: (1) Black. (2) male, (3) senior or graduate standing, and (4) be enrolled fulltime during the Fall 2014 semester.

Individual Student Profile

Sam, 21, is a very polite, mild mannered student leader. He was raised in St Louis, Missouri by both of his parents. Education played a big role in his household with both his parents being college educated and his mother even holding a masters in Business Administration. Sam transferred to the current Midwest PWI from another PWI to pursue a political science degree in the hopes of being a lawyer. As a student he was

very involved in numerous organizations including Black Student Union, Pre-aw Society, Pi Sigma Alpha, University Board, and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Most notably however is that Sam served as the Student Body president while on Student Government.

Will, 22, is a quiet first year graduate student majoring in Computer Technology. He grew up in a single parent household on the southside of Chicago with his three brothers and sisters. Without his father in the home, Will acknowledges his older cousin as a positive Black male influence in his life. Will, a first generation college student, graduated from the same midsize Midwest predominantly White institution he is currently pursuing a masters from, with a bachelor's degree a year prior in 2013. As an undergraduate, Will was a student worker, involved in several recognized student organizations and a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. As a graduate student he continues his membership in his fraternity as well as works as a graduate assistantship.

Rick, 22, is a soft spoken, highly goal oriented African American male anticipating graduation in the spring of 2015 with a degree in Biological Sciences. Rick was raised in the south suburb of Monee, Illinois right outside of Chicago. He was raised with his three sibling in a home headed by both of his parents. Having a father whom possess a doctorate degree, Rick is very focused on his school work and pursuing his education as far as necessary to be successful. After transferring from a historically Black college or University, Rick attended the predominantly White institution with the goal of working in the medical field, specifically Physical Therapy. As a student he was heavily involved holding positions on University Board as the comedy coordinator, secretary for his fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated, and Minority Affairs Peer Leader Program.

Rob is a 23 year old recent graduate and newlywed is from Chicago, Illinois and one of six children. He is also a proud Christian planning to pursue a career in Psychosocial Oncology. Having graduated in the Fall of 2014, Rob, at the time of the interview was unemployed but still was very active in the student organization ACTS (Apostolic Christians in Today's Society) Ministry. Rob has been accepted into several graduate programs and plans to pursue his masters in the fall of 2015. With both parents having earned at least bachelor degrees, Rob was not unfamiliar to college. He cites his father and uncle as positive male influences in his life.

Chris, 22, is an outspoken, highly involved, charismatic senior with ambitious goals. Hailing from Chicago, Illinois, Chris is one of seven children raised in a single mother household however he still maintains a strong relationship with his father. As a first generation college student Chris is an Applied Engineering and Technology major excelling both academically and professionally making the Dean's List twice. After transferring from another Midwest PWI he held leadership positions in his fraternity Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc, in which he was president, Society of Manufacturing Engineers, and ATMAE. Following graduation Chris will attend graduate school in the hopes of becoming a project manager.

Researcher

The researcher's interest in the subject stems from two life experiences; 1) being a Black male whom attended a predominantly White institution and has noticed first-hand and been effected by the nonexistence of positive Black mentor whom deem it necessary to mentor a younger Black male and 2) being a staff member at a predominantly White institution who currently provides mentorship to Black males with little or no assistance

from other Black faculty/staff at the institution. Through personal occurrences the researcher has developed an idea of why students do not seek or consider mentoring but would like to understand from today's student what ideologies or forces has lead them to either be involved in mentoring or not be involved in mentoring.

Data Collection

Data was collected through interviews of five participants select from the targeted demographic. The interviews were video recorded and then transcribed. The transcription was then used to abstract recurring ideas and thoughts on the subject. Those commonalities were applied to previous theories and frameworks to draw a conclusion on the subject matter.

Treatment of Data

The data from the transcribed one-on-one interviews were placed in a computer used by the primary investigator. The computer is password protected and only the primary investigator has access to the files stored on this computer. If participants formally withdraw from the study at any point in time, their feedback will not be included in the final reporting. After research is completed, the data will be kept for three years. After three years, data will be destroyed in compliance with institutional IRB requirements. The footage from the interviews were stored on a disc and kept in a locked drawer when not being used for transcribing. Participation was completely voluntary and a consent form describing the participants' rights and usage of data provided was signed by all participants prior to interviews. All data was reported in confidence and with the use of pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. The data collected

was scrutinized by the researcher for repeating themes that could be used to compare with literature to draw conclusions to the research questions being posed.

Data Analysis

Following interviews the researcher viewed each video, transcribe the results and analyzed the transcription for themes. Prior to reviewing the transcription the researcher sent the results to the interviewee to confirm answers and beliefs as stated during the interview. The data extracted from the interviews were separated according to theme and used as support for broader ideas. The questionnaires were also assessed for recurring themes. Only the most relevant and repeated information was used as findings for the study.

Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of this research was to examine the perception of Black male students on Black faculty/staffs involvement in their mentoring while attending a predominantly White institution. Four research questions guided the study: (1) What is the value of mentorships related to attending a higher education institution, (2) What factors lead Black male students to seek mentorships, (3) What are the perceived differences between mentorship with cross-race faculty/staff and Black male faculty/staff, and (4) What is the Black males' perception of the role of mentorship to their success?

Participant Breakdown

Sample Population

Five individuals were selected to participate in an in person interview. Of the participants 80 percent (N = 4) were classified as having senior standing and the remaining 20 percent (N = 1) being classified as having graduate standing. In addition, three of the interviewees had grade point averages in the 3.0 range, 3.0 – 3.99. One participant had a 4.0 grade point average and the other a 3.0 grade point average, being 2.98. The majors varied for each interviewee with majors being communications, computer technology, applied engineering, biological science and political science. All of the participants are involved on campus in some capacity, 80 percent belonging to a Black Greek letter organization. Further information revealed that the majority of the participants are from a major city, three being Chicago, Illinois and one being St. Louis, Missouri. Also revealed was that 60 percent of the participants identify as being first generation college students.

Research Question I: What is the value of mentorships related to attending a higher education institution?

This research question was answered by the following three open ended questions asked to participants: (1) How do you define mentorship, (2) Have you ever been mentored in the past? Describe, and (3) why do you think mentorship is important or not for Black males attending a predominately White institutions? From the responses, major themes and reoccurring words were extracted to determine Black males value of mentorship. These themes helped develop the meaning of mentorship in the perception of the student and determine the value of mentorship to Black males in higher education. Each theme will be reviewed in Table 1, and examined in the following text.

Table 1 – Categories of Value of mentorship for Participants

Categories	Description of Category
Guidance	Advice or direction given by someone of authority aimed at leading one in a direction that would be prosperous for their endeavors
Growth	An increase in mental capacity regarding various areas such as academics, character, professionalism, and leadership
Acceptance	Feelings of being welcomed and adequate by the dominant group
Retention	Providing services that retains a student from one year to the next until graduation

Guidance. The most quoted term used when defining mentorship was guidance. Students viewed mentorship as a means of being lead in a direction that would help them

through any situation. Often spoken as someone older, the mentoring would take place between a more experienced, educated individual and a moldable individual looking for assistance. The actual act of mentoring was not limited to only academic needs but took place to in a series of settings as a way to produce a positive outcome. Rick reflected this point stating:

I define mentorship mostly as having somebody who is typically older than you who is guiding you. It can be academically, it can be mentally. Someone who is there looking out for you trying to make sure you stay on the right path, trying to make sure you're getting your work done and that you are growing as a person, as well.

Sam, expressed specifically that the mentoring can “be school, social life, relationships and family things.” The mentor is not confined to being a particular kind of individual such as a professor or staff member at a higher education institution but rather can be any one person or multiple people with valuable advice. Rob expressed feelings that the mentor sees potential in the mentee and sought them out in order to fully develop them.

Growth. Four of the five participants communicated having been mentored in the past and spoke favorably of their experience. While discussing their experience with being mentored two of them explicitly stated that they liked the experience. The things that they learned were of importance to them and expressed in their responses. Three of the participants described their experience listing several individuals as contributors including staff from the institution, family members, supervisors, and colleagues. Rob stated that for him mentorship served as a preventative mechanism from making certain mistakes: “there is always information you don't know even when you think you might

have known it.” Participants believed that mentors saw potential in the mentee that either led them to mentor them or for them to seek mentorship from a mentor. Sam described this experience as being a blessing. He said that his mentor assisted him through college, sports, taught him the meaning of family and even inspired his choice to join his fraternity. Chris described his growth from mentorship in the aspect of leadership. Being able to take constructive criticism was different for him and offered him a different perspective.

Acceptance. The participants overwhelmingly believed that the mentoring of Black males on a predominantly White campus was of importance. The initial campus environment when attending a PWI was of concern for the participants. They expressed the difficulties faced by a young Black male on a campus that is not intentionally designed to support them. Sam stated that “in the media we have negative connotations and when you come in you are not given the benefit of the doubt so that can cause you to be discouraged.” Chris echoed this sentiment stating “when you go to a predominantly White institution it is going to be a little harder on you so you need someone of like attainment who you can fellowship with. You need that.” Much like Sam and Chris, Rick believed that preconceived notations of Black males, often from the characters portrayed in the media, misguides young Black youth and that mentoring could help. He further stated that

It has helped me so I don't see why it couldn't help someone younger than me. Because I feel like a lot of younger Black males feel some sort of prejudice toward white people, depending where they come from, but here we have a lot of kids from Chicago who feel sorta prejudice toward white people. I don't want to

say racist but prejudice toward White people and when you are at a predominantly White institution that's not going to help you because when you look around you see all white people.

The aid of mentors give the student a sense of acceptance on a campus otherwise unaccepting and encourages them to not give up.

Retention. The feeling of inclusion and acceptance offered by mentors on campus can also serve as a method of increasing retention according to three participants. Sam explicitly expressed that not having someone on campus to guide and support you can result in a student falling behind and ultimately dropping out of school. Environment can play a major role for a minority student according to Rob. He stated that "it is important for them (Black males) to find that mentor because it is going to help them feel as though they have a home in an unfamiliar setting."

Research Question 2: What factors lead Black male students to seek mentorships?

When determining what factors led the five individuals to seek mentorship the following questions were addressed to participants: (1) who are people in your life that has been influential in your development, (2) what difficulties, if any, did you experience when transitioning to college, (3) As a Black male student, are there any experiences you have encountered that can be viewed as being hostile or racially driven on campus, (4) is there anyone on campus you were able to speak to regarding your academic, personal or professional goals, (5) how important is it for you to have someone to help guide and support you, (6) are there instances where you felt alone or ostracized while on campus, (7) do you interact socially on campus. Why or why not? The themes derived from these questions are displayed in Table 2 and explained the following text

Table 2. Categories of factors leading to mentorship

Categories	Description of Category
Unsupported	Feelings of isolation and not having assistance for needs pertaining to educational, professional, and personal goals
Sense of Belonging	Feelings of acceptance by the institution and those who inhabit it. An environment that allows one to feel comfortable, inspired, and happy

Unsupported. Four of the participants explained their feelings of segregation when arriving to campus and initially not feeling supported. As freshman or transfer students they expressed being lost on campus, not knowing how to access resources and not having the tools to balance the new demands placed on them. Four of the participants also stated that they initially used family as mentors to help them navigate their new environment despite them never having been a student nor familiar with the campus. They spoke about the difficulties of transitioning to college and not being prepared for the work and not having the skills to succeed. Will expressed feeling that he was on his own and often wandered the campus asking questions his sophomore year after realizing he was struggling to excel. He further detailed his experience stating:

Initially my cousin would hit me up every once in a while to make sure I was doing what I needed to do. I feel like I just didn't see any realistic value when I came down here. I know I had to do it so I was just going to do it so it kinda pushed me back. I didn't really jump into going beyond the classroom to learn

stuff until I became an upperclassman just because I really didn't know how important it was.

Rob expressed similar feelings stating:

Well to be honest I really didn't have help my first year when I came in as a transfer. I just went into my academics believing I had to do it, that it just had to be me. However, that did not work out so well so between my junior and senior year I began to explore various options.

As a transfer student Rick noticed the difference between the support system at his previous university, a historically Black college or university, and the PWI he currently attended. He believed that the PWI did not do things to intentionally support students and aid them in their endeavors. He said "here at a PWI, academically you are on your own to succeed. When I went to a HBCU one of the things they really tried to do was to integrate the faculty and older students with the younger students." He further explains:

Here it is basically you go to class, study for your test, and if you have any questions you go to your teacher. At the HBCU it was basically you go to class, you study, you have review sessions, a lot of tutoring, teachers held review sessions and a lot of forums encouraging us and keeping us on track.

Student's inability to find individuals to support them on campus as they previously had with family members at home hindered their initial success in college. After finding support groups such as TRIO/Student Support Services, S.T.R.O.N.G. MENToring or a fraternity they felt encouraged and gave them the tools to thrive which motivated them to then reach out to professors for help.

Sense of Belonging. All five participants expressed having experienced situations on campus that they believed were hostile or racially driven. Participants recalled situations that dealt with professors, colleagues, peers and local law enforcement. Chris stated:

I experienced different ethnicities screaming out crazy things from their cars to law enforcement telling me “I’ll see to it that you don’t graduate” to them showing up to my house more than twelve times a semester. On top of that when you’re a college student, especially when you are doing good, it is a lot to take in but it is a lot on a Black male student at a PWI and that is where that mentorship comes in.

Other students spoke on instances where they were treated unfairly by officers and administration during campus events. They believed that they were wrongfully accused or prevented from doing things that their White counterparts had the freedom to do regularly.

In the classroom students also felt the segregation often times being the only African American student in their courses. Three students expressed similar views of isolation and even felt burden to be the representative for their entire race. When it comes to interacting with their White peers and faculty they have to work harder to gain their respect. Sam detailed experiences in both the classroom and playing sports where he had to prove his capabilities and place at the university because his White counterparts believed he was only able to attend because of affirmative action laws. He recalls taking these occurrences and others like it and using it as motivation. Sam stated: “They say something not derogatory but belittling and I see it as “ok, you have no idea who I am

and you have no idea what I am capable of,” so I use that as motivation to do better.” Even after excelling and proving them wrong Sam vividly remembers them then saying “you are not like all Black people or you are the exception.” Visibly angered by the insinuation that the perception of the average Black male is negative, Sam admits that he is still affected by this and he works to change that perception. While Sam used it to motivate himself, other students like Rick tried to ignore these types of comments. He stated:

It doesn't faze me anymore. It's been happening since I got here but I just got used to it to the point where I'm just like “it's whatever.” It's just like sit there do your homework, don't look like you're doing anything suspicious. When you are the only Black person in the class teachers and students are already looking at you sideways. They may be expecting you to do something to mess up so I try to avoid that.

Two participants expressed that naturally as an African American you are inclined to seek help from other African Americans. Chris articulated that this is because they (Black faculty and staff) are most able to help you because they have endured these issues themselves.

Research Question 3: What are the perceived differences between mentorship with cross-race faculty/staff and Black male faculty/staff?

The following four questions guided the research question which sought to determine what differences exist with cross race mentoring: (1) Do you feel comfortable seeking assistance from your White professors inside or outside of the classroom, (2) what differences have you noticed, if any, in faculty or staff interest in your success when

they were Black or White, (3) what barriers, if any, exist that hinders your ability to create relationships with professors of another race, and (4) do you feel accepted by your college instructors? The themes derived from these questions are displayed in Table 3 and explained the following text.

Table 3. Factors contributing to barriers to Cross-Race Mentoring

Categories	Description of Category
Comfort	Feeling of ease and freedom from feelings of grief or strain.
Black Faculty/Staff Willingness	The readiness of African American university employees to assist the needs of African American students
Stereotypes	The perpetuation of overly simplified images of a particular race or ethnicity

Comfort. All participants expressed feeling comfortable asking their professors for help inside and outside of the classroom however four of the participants also expressed not always having these feelings of comfort and that numerous factors contribute to their comfort level. Sam, the only participant who have always felt comfortable with his white professors, identified his upbringing as a reason for him being so comfortable seeking assistance from white professors. He said:

Because my parents always taught me the most important thing is the education and you must go beyond any personal issues you may have with them so at the end of the day I am going to him for me.

He also however, links his comfortability with professor to how they typically interact with him which is generally more favorable than other Black males because he is the

“exception” for Black males. Sam believes that because of his professional demeanor he is not treated the same as his peers because he may be viewed as less threatening.

The other four participants, who also expressed comfort, expressed feelings that could hinder some Black males if not properly addressed. Rick expressed never being treated differently by his white professors but also insinuates that any negative experiences he has had he has become use to it and comfortable with it. He has had to adapt to this retreat in order to be successful in the classroom. He insist that that all of his professors regardless of race want him to succeed, however, he is also able to identify a disparity in the interactions between Black students with White professors and White students with White professors. Rick contributes these differences in the perceived differences in backgrounds and commonalities between the Black students and their White professors. He said:

One thing I have noticed is that if I am going to see one of my White teachers, I'm going in there straight on business. With White students they go in there on business too but it is a more friendly relationship. Not that my teachers aren't friendly it just seem like they can form a buddy-buddy relationship easier. That's just something I never tried to do because I never really saw what I really have in common with this teacher to point where I am going to want to stick around their office joking around with them.

Will believes that when he arrived to campus he immediately felt the ethnic clashes and that contributed to his hesitation to seek help. All of the participants agreed that the comfort level was subject to the individual and that they have experienced some White professors who cared more than others and are willing to help you.

Black Faculty/Staff Willingness. When examining the difference in the faculty and staff's interest in Black male success and the contribution they make when they were Black or White, four of the students believed that there were some differences. The most prevailing theme was that Black faculty and staff were more willing to help and focused on the student's holistic being. The students felt that White faculty was solely focused on their academic endeavors and only helped when specifically asked. Chris echoed this sentiment stating that the Minority Affairs office and staff helped him with things like resume building, time management, volunteering and other skills that helped him function in the classroom, however, White faculty/staff only focused things dealing with his major. He also expressed that when White professors spoke to him they talked in a condescending tone, often saying things like "you suppose to know this already." He further states "they (White professors) don't do as much hands on work with you." Will takes the idea further stating that he believes that with Black professor classes would be easier because they would be more willing to help. When speaking about the idea of having a Black professor he said

Even if it was the same work just because they were Black I may have felt as if I could automatically just come talk to them and I don't have to worry about what they think and they should just accept me for who I am. It is just a different mindset I might have had.

Sam followed these ideas stating the following:

I found that more of the Black ones will take more out of their time to help you. The White ones they'll give you some resources and sometime but I think they (Black faculty/staff) really want you to do it.

Sam went on to describe how that interaction may happen insisting that White faculty and staff may give you some direction but Black faculty and staff put in more effort. The students also suggested that having or finding White faculty and staff who genuinely care about you is rare. One student stated that they were “lucky” to find those types of White professors. Another insinuated that because his professors were more liberal that they were more accustomed to diversity and therefore more willing to help Black students.

Stereotypes. When interacting with White professors the students addressed certain barriers that could prevent them from seeking assistance from their professors. Although the responses varied ultimately they felt that stereotypes are the major barrier to their interactions and relationships with White faculty and staff. Participants believe that outside perceptions of Black males may result in professors treating Black males differently in the classroom. Chris explains that with what is going on in the world today with Black males may hinder positive interactions. He said:

...so you come to college and you are at a predominantly White institution and all of these things are going on. It can confuse the brain of the Black male and make them more want to focus on that relationship with the Black faculty instead of creating relationships with faculty of another race.

Rob agrees expressing that “if a professor labels me or categorizes me or overly generalizes me for a particular stereotype that is often placed on African Americans it could make their approach skewed and bias.” It is White faculty and staff’s approaches that makes Sam hesitant to build relationships. Sam said he is often confused when interacting with White professors because he is unable to determine if they are joking when it comes to certain comments or attitudes or if they truly just do not like Black

people. He also was very adamant that older White people are the biggest perpetrators of these negative attitudes due largely to historical events. He speaks about difficult interactions and condescending tones stating:

I have had a bad, well I wouldn't say bad experience but just like are you trying to help me? Like don't tell me to do something that I already know to do. I know to read my notes. I am asking you to elaborate.

These stereotypes can also be on behalf of the Black students toward the White faculty and staff.

Research Question 4: What is the Black males' perception of the role of mentorship to their success?

This research question was answered by the following three open ended questions asked to participants: (1) what role do you think faculty and staff play in the success of students, (2) what factors contribute to your academic progress and (3) what type of person typically seeks additional support and guidance while in college? From the responses major themes and reoccurring words were extracted to determine how mentorship could contribute to the Black male's success in higher education. These themes helped understand what factors of mentorship has the most impact on their success. Each theme will be reviewed in Table 4, and examined in the following text.

Table 4. Role of Mentorship

Categories	Description of Category
Bridging the Gap	The efforts of faculty and staff to bring understanding and cohesiveness between the institution and Black students.
Encouragement	The act of motivating someone to succeed by supporting them and instilling confidence.
In Good Company	Friends, family, and associates who inspire the student to advance in their endeavors.

Bridging the Gap. Unanimously the students believed that the involvement of mentors (i.e. faculty and staffs) in their education was important and vital to their success. The participants felt that faculty and staff should help to build them as students. The faculty/staff has invaluable information that can help the student to succeed inside and outside of the classroom. Four of the participants expressed that faculty play a huge role in their success as they are the ones administering test and providing grades. Professors are a key factor in the student's ability to bridge the gap between what the student currently knows and what they should know about the material being presented. One student mentioned that having a relationship with their professor is crucial to their success because they do not use tutors for support. He said:

I've never even wasted my time going to the tutor in the biology department because they are kids themselves so they might not know it. So if a student feels like they cannot go to their teacher for help and talk about their grades then it is going to discourage them.

Sam echoed the notion that teachers are the biggest factor when trying to be successful in the classroom. He expressed that if the professor is not working with you and you do not see eye to eye it can make your experience difficult. Sam states: "... because they do control your grade. So I think they do play a certain role especially if they are the ones grading the test you have to answer the questions the way they want you to." Chris believed that it is the responsibility of faculty and staff to share what they know with you so you can pass that information along to the next student. He said:

Everything we think we're doing they have done it. They are there to help you and guide you. We call them bridge builders. They are supposed to help build that bridge so you can help build another student who may be coming into your profession or if you decide to become a professor or faculty member.

Rob mirrored these feelings adding "I believe they play a tremendous role because they are simplifying complex information, sharing insight on their real world experiences and serve as a resource for students."

Encouragement. The relationship students develop with mentors can originate from numerous sources according to the participants but most notable from ambitious individuals looking to advance. Three students expressed that these relationships develop from the need for encouragement to improve and not remain stagnant in their endeavors. In regards to why students seek mentorship Rick believes it was because they were looking to better themselves and they knew that they were not able to do it on their own. He goes on speaking about those who seek mentorship saying:

Any student who knows that reaching out for help is ok, they are going to seek mentorship. Student who want to build a relationship with other because mentors

can help in a lot more ways than just tutoring. They are there for advice and hold you responsible too.

Chris added that students who experience difficulties when trying to take in some of their coursework and things like that seek help, support and guidance through mentorship. He further explains when students have mentors who see potential in them it encourages them. Sam states "...because if no one is there to get on you about going to them you're not going to take the extra steps to do what you need to do to succeed." Although the participants believed the mentor played a big role in their success they also believed that the student needed to be ambitious and motivated to seek assistance.

Rick also added that he believes that having Black males working in higher education and serving as mentors further encourages Black male students to do well. In regards to Black male representation on campus, Rick stated:

They can see what Black males success looks like. The fact that they don't see that here is a reason why I think they just are not focused on the things they need to be focused on. Especially in a town like Charleston where there are not many Black people to begin with so they just want to go back home to what they know and sometimes where they are coming from they still are not seeing Black male success.

Will expressed that having Black male mentors helps with encouragement because "everybody needs someone who is like them and it just makes it that much more easier." He also stated:

... there isn't anything wrong with having someone of a different culture or race as a mentor but if you can find someone of the same race or culture as you know

it just makes it more because there will always be successful Caucasian people but when you see somebody who is successful as you know Black/African American it just speaks more volume.

Rob shared these thoughts stating

I believe it is very important because it affirms that they too can do it. If you don't see anyone where you want to go or if you don't see anyone who is identical to where you want to go you may believe that you can't.

In Good Company. The participants all expressed that apart of their success is a combination of the motivation they receive from their mentors and the people they surround themselves with. The participants spoke on their family, fraternity brothers, friends and faculty/staff, all of which they previously cited as mentors, who all supported them through their college career. Will commented on the influence of others on his success saying:

...my college career where I choose to associate myself with certain people who didn't have a positive outlook or they weren't about anything so at first it might not affect you but eventually you start to pick up on some they habits.

Sam had similar comments saying

There are a lot of factors. The people around me including friends, family, and other students. I look at other students, this may be good or bad depending on who you talk to, as competition. If they are doing well then I have to do better.

Sam goes on to explain that part of his success is the support that he has received. He also mentioned that by him having parents who went to college it helped him as well. He said:

I see it a lot with first generation students that if their parents never been to school they cannot give the best advice. I have heard some parents just tell them “well you can just get a job.” They don’t really encourage them because they don’t know. But for me both of my parents went to school so finishing school was not an option. It had to be done.

Chris described the relationship with his fraternity as a contributor to his success saying:

I think my fraternity had a lot to do with my success because I had to endure certain things in order to advance and it just gave me a sense of being and a sense of pride within myself. I come from good people, I come from good company and I can be anything I want to be.

Chris added that he believed that having Black male mentors who have overcome these situations is important for you to be able to advance. He also stated “I never had family who have been to college so to be in college and succeed it definitely played a major role once I realized my full potential on an academic level. It made me want to succeed more.” Rob also followed this train of thought adding that having genuinely good people who are supportive and encouraging has helped keep him in school.

Chapter V

Findings & Recommendations

Navigating a new environment can be difficult. Learning ways to cope with challenges and develop solutions for these challenges can also be difficult especially if not equipped with the proper resources. Black males commonly face the challenge of navigating a college environment that is not designed to welcome or support them. Predominantly White institutions have been historically deigned to promote the needs of White students but failed to create spaces that encourage not alienate Black students, especially Black males. Black students must seek familiar faces in order to create a feeling of belonging and comfort on these campuses. Mentorship is one resource that Black males seek when feelings of isolation, defeat, and despair take over. Mentors are able to assist students with these feelings providing them with motivation, resources, opportunities, and support that ultimately retains them through to graduation. Mentorship is beneficial in the success of college students and therefore serves as an important piece of the puzzle when deciding what factors could assist in increasing the graduation and retention rates of the Black male.

With the lowest graduation rates of any race and gender, Black males need an intervention to alter the downward spiral currently occurring. With less than 4% of faculty and staff being Black in the Higher Education system, PWI's have the difficult task of creating social and academic environments that allow these students to network, interact, integrate with the rest of campus and excel. Because Black students express difficulty forming positive relationships with White faculty and staff on campus, networks devised to support these students are necessary with Black faculty and staff

who have experienced and navigated the system before. Research has consistently emphasized the importance of a supportive environment as well as mentorship to any student's collegiate success. This chapter will compare and contrast the study's findings to that of previous literature, discuss recommendations for student affairs professionals, limitations and conclusions.

Summary of Findings

This study aimed to determine the perception of Black male students on mentorship and their matriculation through Higher Education. Of particular interest was the perception these students had of mentoring and the factors that contributed to them seeking mentorship at predominantly White institutions. The researcher examined the value Black males placed on mentorship, experiences that led to mentorships, barriers that exist between cross race mentoring, and the benefits received from mentorship.

Four main research questions guided this study: (1) What is the value of mentorships related to attending a higher education institution, (2) What factors lead Black male students to seek mentorships, (3) What are the perceived differences between mentorship with cross-race faculty/staff and Black male faculty/staff, and (4) What is the Black males' perception of the role of mentorship to their success?

Perceived Value of Mentorship.

In response to the first research question the results revealed four categories that expressed the value Black males placed on mentorship at predominantly White institutions. The categories included: guidance, growth, acceptance, and retention. Prior research found positive correlations between students and their attitudes toward mentorships and the results it has on their college careers. Kim (2010) found a

significant difference in student's grade point averages when they received mentorship versus when they did not; this study also found similar results from a qualitative perspective. The research institution reported a cumulative grade point average for this demographic of Black males as 2.70 while these participants averaged a 3.35 GPA. The academic guidance provided by mentorship was also expressed by some of the participants in the study as a valuable service. In regards to the guidance offered by mentors, Reio and Robinson (2011) found that mentors give students access to an experienced professional who provides them with support, resources and feedback. This finding is consistent with the perception of the participants in this study. Will, for instance, described not having a mentor initially when entering the predominantly White institution and not knowing about resources or feeling supported. He describes his lack of having a mentor saying: "challenges I faced would be knowing how to gain access to resources... when I got here nothing was really centralized and you kinda have to go out on your own." Chris noted that part of the guidance provided by mentors was the feedback received from the encounter.

Another value discovered was growth. Previous research by Lincoln and Stanley (2005) stated that mentors draw on the mentee's strength and weaknesses to address their needs, and nurture the mentee in a way that they capitalize on their skills and grow. This is supported by the student's perception with participants like Rob describing it as an opportunity for the mentor to mold them. Will supported this stating: "... you need that one person in your ear telling you not to give up or pushing you. Pretty much making you do things you never would have done on your own."

Along with growth and guidance, the feeling of acceptance was an added value of mentorship according to the results of this study. Having a mentor provided the students with a sense of belonging by having someone invest time in them. Prior research on mentoring did not directly speak to acceptance as being a perceived value of mentorship but explained that faculty and staff taking interest in their lives assist in student success. Research focused on the effects of not having feelings of acceptance and how those feelings can contribute to one's unsuccessful journey through higher education. Cuyjet (2007) found that for Black males to have an environment that is conducive to their learning they must have feelings of engagement, acceptance, encouragement and support. However, predominantly White institutions often provide them with feelings of hostility and alienation. Chris echoed this feeling saying "So when you go to a predominantly White institution it is going to be a little harder on you so you need someone of like attainment who you can fellowship with. You need that."

These feelings of acceptance are related with the fourth theme of retention, which the students expressed to be of value as well. The environment contributed to both students' feelings of acceptance and their decision to remain at the university. Reio and Robinson (2011) discovered that positive relationships between mentors and mentees increases the mentees dedication to organization which contributes to their retention. This study agreed with that with participants like Rob stating: "...it is important for them (Black males) in particular to find that mentor because it is going to help them feel as though they have a home in an unfamiliar setting." He continued "...that is one factor that can contribute to their discontinuation to them completing their college degree." Sam remarked: "... if there is not someone there to help you, guide you and support you

then you could fall even further behind and ultimately even drop out of school.” The participants in this study perception of mentorship was similar to prior research who found guidance, growth, acceptance, and retention as a value.

Factors leading to Mentorship.

The second research question of the current study aimed to find what experiences lead Black males to engage in mentorship opportunities at predominantly White institutions. Two themes emerged as factors including feelings of being unsupported and wanting a sense of belonging. Prior research did not discuss specific factors leading Black males to seek mentorship but factors can be inferred through research dictating the need for Black males to have mentoring opportunities on predominantly White campuses. Rodgers and Summers (2008) described the environment Black males at predominantly White institutions face are unsupportive and full of stereotypes that contribute to their low graduation and retention rates. This study echoed previous research findings that the unsupportive nature of the campus led students to seek the mentoring of faculty/staff, often Black faculty/staff. One reflection of this was Rob’s belief that when he first attended the university he felt like he had to do everything on his own and did not have any help. Rick noticed the difference in the support system at the predominantly White institution versus the historically Black college and university he attended. In regards to the environment at the PWI Rick stated that: “here, academically, you are on your own to succeed.” Contrary to PWI environments, research found that the environment of HBCU campuses provided the students with more spaces to excel and improve academic deficiencies. Allen (1992) and later Strayhorn (2008) found that academic achievements of Black males were highest at HBCUs because the campus fostered supportive

relationships between faculty/staff and students. All of the participant's comments resembled this finding and stated that the support gained and relationships built from being mentored by faculty/staff contributed to their success.

Feelings of alienation and isolation is another major factor that led the participants to seek mentorship. The need to build a sense of belonging at the institution was expressed the students and revealed in prior research. Like previously stated, research asserts that Black students at PWIs feel alienated, racially discriminated and segregated (Allen, 1992). Four of the participants conveyed these feelings with Chris describing an instance stating: "I experienced different ethnicities screaming out crazy things from their cars to law enforcement telling me "I'll see to it that you don't graduate"." Examples like these came from several of the participants who expressed hostile situations or experiences where they felt bias treatment. In addition to an alienating campus, instances of isolation in the classroom is prominent for these participants. Research also discussed this with the phenomenon of "onlyness" by Harper (2012). The "onlyness" theory discusses Black students regularly being the only Black individual in their classes and serving as the spokesperson for their entire race. In accordance with this theory Rob remarked: "Sometimes I feel thankful and feel accomplished and other times I feel burdened for my race because I wonder where they are."

Another theory used in previous research to describe experiences of Black male students on predominantly White campuses was the idea of "acting White." Again, prior research did not directly address what factors lead Black males to seek mentorship but these negative experiences can be causes for them to desire mentoring. "Acting White" when described by Harper (2012) explains the racial tension Black students face when

they excel academically and must defend their right to be at the institution. Brittan, Sy, and Stokes (2008) stated that these tensions are because Black students who are educated are being associated with “acting White” because being educated is a primary reserved for White privilege. Several of the participants expressed instances where this sort of experience occurred during their collegiate career. However, Sam explained explicit examples that have affected him: “... I gained their (White faculty/staff and students) respect because I brought out a side they did not see. One of the things that I did not like that I heard was that “you are not like all Black people or you are the exception.”

Barriers to Cross Race Mentoring.

The third research question of this study looked to determine what differences Black males believed existed between their interactions with Black faculty/staff and White faculty/staff. The participants expressed barriers that hindered them from developing positive relationships with White faculty/staff. Although this study found that all the participants currently feel comfortable seeking assistance from their professors, there were several instances throughout their college experience where the participants did not feel comfortable with their professors. Some of the participants also expressed having to adapt to their negative interactions with White faculty, staff and students in order to prosper at the university. The major barriers the participants perceived to exist with White faculty/staff were comfort level, willingness to help, and stereotyping.

The first barrier examined is the comfort level Black males have with White faculty/staff. Prior research by Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2002) found that White mentors have difficulty building relationships with Black mentees because of the perception Black males have of White Americans based on the history of discrimination,

oppression and violence toward them. Sam's beliefs mirrored this research stating that older White people are the most likely to react unfavorably to Black students because of historical factors surrounding Blacks and Whites in America. Another participant also noticed a disconnect between White professor and Black students because of current racial tensions in America that can cloud the judgement of Blacks perception toward White Americans. In regards to the current tension Chris stated: "It can confuse the brain of the Black male and make them more want to focus on that relationship with Black faculty instead of creating relationships with faculty of another race."

The historical tensions between the two races cause students to feel uncomfortable seeking mentorship opportunities from White faculty/staff but also lead White faculty/staff to stereotype these Black students. According to Lewis, Hagood-Elliot, Seepersad, & Strickland (2007), misunderstandings between the two groups hinder the development of relationships because of one's perception of the other culture. This study agreed with those findings with comments like Rob's stating: "if a professor labels me or categorizes me or overly generalizes me for a particular stereotype that is placed on African Americans it could make their approach skewed." Similar stereotyping was expressed previously with Sam's declaration describing how students and faculty have low expectations for Black students and are surprised when they exceed their expectations. When facing these stereotypes Sam recalls thinking: "Ok, you have no idea who I am and you have no idea what I am capable of."

The responses of the participants in this study revealed that in their opinion Black faculty and staff were more willing to assist them than White faculty/staff. Again, previous research did not directly address Black faculty and staff being more willing to

help however it did state that Black faculty/staff involvement in mentorship typically were more beneficial to Black students than White faculty/staff. However, prior research by Tuitt (2012) found that Black students found Black faculty/staff to be more accessible and easier to communicate with. Allen et. al (2000) reported that the absence of Black faculty and staff has a direct effect on the completion rates of Black males. The participants in this study found similar results. The participants in the current study believed that Black faculty/staff took greater interest in their endeavors and took more time out their day to assist them. Participants like Will expressed feelings of ease communicating with Black faculty/staff stating: "I could automatically just come talk to them and I don't have to worry about what they think." Some participants thought that White faculty/staff were willing to help but only focused on academic issues whereas Black faculty/staff contributed to their holistic growth. Sam specifically stated: "I found that more of the Black ones will take more out of their time to help you." Another student resembled these thoughts and added that they would consider themselves lucky to find a White professor who sincerely cared for them.

Role of Mentorship.

The fourth research question sought to find out the role Black males believed mentorship served in their success. In addressing this question the participants described three areas where mentorship contributed to their successful integration with the campus and academic careers. The five participants saw mentorship as a way to bridge the gap they experienced on campus and in the classroom, encourage them to improve, and surround themselves with like-minded individuals to motivate them.

The participants in this study found that faculty/staff had a commitment to ensuring that they were equipped with the information they needed to excel inside and outside of the classroom. Prior research by Thomas, Willis, & Davis (2007) claimed that Black males perform better when their professors encourage them and take additional opportunities to support outside of the classroom setting. The finding was supported by the comments of the participants in this study. The participants all agreed that the faculty have the opportunity to help them be successful because they are vessels of knowledge that can be conferred to them to ease the struggle in their educational journey. Although his finding is not specific to Black males, it is important to notice the desire the participants have to build these positive relationships. According to the participants it is these relationships that also bridge the racial disparities that exist between Black students and White faculty/staff. Sam, who previously mentioned that racial differences and undertones can hinder his relationship with a professor, expressed that “if the professor is not working with you and you cannot see eye to eye it can make your experience difficult.” It is gaps like these that make for poor academic progress and lower graduation and retention rates for Black males in higher education. The participants expressed that faculty are in control of you grade, therefore they control you academic destiny. Without building valuable relationships students can be discouraged and ultimately unproductive. Chris speaks about how positive relationships can have a trickle-down effect on other students coming into the major. Chris remarked:

They are there to help you and guide you. They are supposed to help build that bridge so you can help build another student who may be coming into your profession or if you decide to become a professor or faculty member.

As previously mentioned, in order for these benefits of mentoring to be realized, especially in cross-race mentoring, the relationships must be genuine. The participants and prior research agree that cultural and racial misconceptions, biases and taboos can interfere with mentoring when they are not build on solid foundations.

The next two themes focus on the encouragement Black males received and how they perceive this encouragement to be a contributor to their success. The first theme is encouragement itself. The participants believed that the encouragement they received from faculty/staff through mentorship helped to motivate them to excel. The student responses in this study again echoed the research by Thomas, Willis, & Davis (2007) that the encouragement they received contributed to their success. Prior research also stated that students need to believe that they are cared about and that a strong concern about their performance must exist for them to succeed (Noguera, 2003). Participant Chris expressed these same feelings stating: "I had a professor pretty much tell me I was lazy. He said "If I gave 10% I would probably be in the honors college." To me it was definitely helpful. It was an honor to hear it from a professor who has his doctorate degree. Who has been doing this for over 20 years. It definitely just makes work harder."

The participants also chose to focus specifically on the encouragement they received from Black faculty and staff and the positive effects that has had on their experiences and education. Previous research also addressed the encouragement Black students receive when they have access to Black faculty and staff. Tuitt's (2012) study demonstrates the need for Black mentors stating that the addition of Black faculty raises the bar and serves as role models and intellectual guides to Black students. The participants of this study agreed with this finding with Rick stating: "They (Black males)

can see what Black male success looks like. The fact that they don't see that here is a reason why I think they are not focused on the things they need to be focused on."

Comments from Will resembled this feeling: "everybody needs someone who is like them and it just makes it that much easier."

The second theme focused on the encouragement they received from the company they kept. It is the company that they kept that these participants felt contributed to their success. This company consisted of friends, family, fraternity, etc. but all served as mentors during their college experience. Prior research was adamant about the benefits of Black students being surrounded by other Black students, especially those who are achieving academically. In the research Black males believed that they thrived in environments of like-minded individuals. (Davis, Maramba, & Palmer, 2010). Grier-Reed's (2010) study also found that having comfortable environments with similar individuals allowed students to cope with stress, cultural conflict, and racism and vocalize their concerns added to their persistence to graduation and even increased their grade point average. The findings of this study were similar to the previous research. The participants found that by surrounding themselves with people who want to excel they were motivated to do well themselves. Rick spoke about the positive effects the minority male mentoring program he joined had on him at the predominantly White campus stating:

My academic advisor right now is good but she not great. Like half the time I go see her she can remember my face but she cannot remember my name. That's when I started reaching out to STRONG MENToring and I saw what you was doing for the guys there so I started reaching out to you because I figured you could help more to me than she could.

It was this comfortable space with like-minded Black males that Rick felt encouraged to strive to start looking at extern and internship opportunities. Other participants like Chris spoke on the encouragement joining his fraternity has given him mentioning: "...it gave me a sense of being and a sense of pride within myself." Will's comments follows the trend stating that when he you associate yourself with a certain type of person you often times will begin picking up their bad habits.

Implications of the Research

The following implications were derived based on the responses of the participants of this study in combination with prior research. The focus will continue to be on the benefits of mentorship as it pertains to the environment, cross-race, and same race effects.

1. Black males should be engaged immediately upon entering the college campus of a predominantly White institution. It is during their freshman and sophomore years that these students feel the most isolated and unsupported.
2. The institution must create an environment across the entire campus that is free from racial tension and undermines the academic capabilities of Black male students. This includes training faculty, staff and students on diversity issues and multicultural competencies.
3. Institutions must create programming that promotes a positive Black male experience, address their negative experiences, and identifies strategies for coping with stress, racism and oppression. The programming along with

an assigned space serves as a way to bring like-minded Black males together to encourage, support and embrace each other.

4. Faculty and staff must be strategic in their efforts when working with minority students. When working with Black males they must actively combat negative connotations the media has had on the campus society.
5. Encouragement is a major factor that contributes to the Black male experience at the PWI. In an environment that historically has segregated students, Black students need to feel accepted at the institution and embraced in order to be successful and increase graduation and retention rates.
6. A representation by Black faculty and staff in mentoring opportunities is necessary for Black students to feel comfortable and inspired on campus. Black faculty and staff have the opportunity to serve as role models and visible examples of Black success. They can share their experiences at a PWI and give tips on how to overcome obstacles faced.
7. Because many of the participants communicated a positive experience with Black Greek letter organizations such as fraternities, they could serve as a support system for Black males and provide them with incentive to excel academically and professionally.
8. Cross-race mentoring and engagement is acceptable to Black males but usually occurs as upperclassman. Even when being mentored across races Black males choose to only focus on academic and professional growth.

Recommendations

College Student Affairs Professionals.

1. Student Affairs professionals should work to develop multicultural competencies programming that educate faculty and staff on the Black male experience in America. Programming that equip faculty with the competence to not perpetuate stereotypical ideologies of the Black male that ultimately affect their collegiate successes.
2. Mentoring programs should be designed to address the needs of Black males attending predominantly White institutions. Comfortable spaces that allow them to cope with the racial tension presented on campus needs to be provided in order for these students to vocalize concerns in order to feel accepted. These spaces also must inspire and support them academically, professionally, and personally.
3. Institutions should work to intentionally pursue and hire Black faculty and staff to assist in the needs of Black males. Black male faculty and staff would be a specific interest to serve as role model, mentors, and inspiration to Black males who lack virtually any representation in higher education.
4. Create opportunities where Black male students have interaction with White faculty/staff to ease the comfort level for students.

Future Research.

1. Future research should be conducted to identify the effects negative collegiate environments and feelings of isolation have on Black male's post collegiate career.

2. Research can also be conducted to determine what factors motivate certain students to eventually seek mentorship versus those who never sought assistance and remained uninformed and alienated on campus.
3. Future research can also be conducted on how educator's personal biases affect their interactions with Black male students and the role that plays in their willingness to mentor them.
4. Freshman and transfer students would be of particular interest for future research to help determine their perceptions of mentorships and higher education in general.

Summary

Chapter five of the present study consisted of a thorough review of the findings, implications of these findings, and recommendations for both college student affairs professionals and future researchers. Conclusions were drawn based on the findings in this chapter and compared with prior literature on the topic. Multiple categories were examined in order to determine the perception Black males had on mentorship at predominantly White institutions. From the category of value of mentorship the following main themes were derived: (1) the guidance received (2) the potential for growth (3) feelings of acceptance (4) and helping with retention. The next category was factors leading to mentorships which yielded the following themes: (1) feelings of being unsupported, and (2) a longing for a sense of belonging. Another category focused on the barriers that hindered mentorship with cross race faculty and staff and the following themes emerged: (1) comfort level, (2) Black faculty/staff were more willing to help, and (3) the perpetuation of stereotypes. The last category of interest was on the role of

mentorship in which the following three themes were present: (1) bridge the gap, (2) encouragement, and (3) provided them with good company. Based on the conclusions drawn from these findings it is important that institutions focus on bringing mentoring opportunities to Black male students at predominantly White institutions. Providing these students with access to Black faculty/staff and an environment that accept their differences and promotes their academic and professional capabilities is crucial to their successful retention and graduation in higher education.

References

- (2013, October 30). Retrieved from Merriam-Webster: from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>
- Allen, W. (1992). The color of success: African American college student outcomes at predominantly White and historically Black public colleges and universities. *Harvard Educational Review, 26-44.*
- Allen, W., Bonous-Hammarth, M., Epps, E., Guillory, E., & Suh, S. (2000). The Black academic: faculty status among African Americans in U.S. higher education. *The Journal of Negro Education, 69(1/2)*, 112-127.
- Allison, D. (2008). Free to be me?: Black professors, White institutions. *Journal of Black Studies, 38*, 641-662. doi:10.1177/0021934706289175
- Arriola, K. R., & Powell, C. (2003). Relationship between psychosocial factors and academic achievement among African American students. *The Journal of Educational Research, 96(3)*, 175-181.
- Atkinson, D., & Grant-Thompson, S. (1997). Cross-cultural mentor effectiveness and African American male students. *Journal of Black Psychology, 23(2)*, 120-134.
- Barker, M. (2011, November). Racial context, currency and connections: Black doctoral student and white advisor perspectives on cross-race advising. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 48(4)*, 387-400.
- Bettez, S. C., & Suggs, V. L. (2012, March 7). Centering the educational and social significance of HBCUs: A focus on the educational journeys and thoughts of

- African American scholars. *The Urban Review*, 44, 303-310. doi:10.1007/s11256-012-0201-x
- Brittian, A., Sy, S., & Stokes, J. (2008). Mentoring: Implications for African American College Students. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 33(2), 87-97.
- Brown III, C., & Davis, J. E. (2001). The historically Black college as social contract, social capital, and social equalizer. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 76(1), 31-49. doi:10.1207/S15327930PJE7601_03
- Cancelli, A., Ponterotto, J., Reynolds, A., & Utsey, S. (2000). Racial discrimination, coping, life satisfaction, and self-esteem among African Americans. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 78(1), 72-80.
- Ceja, M., Solorzano, D., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69, 60-73.
- Cole, D. (2010). The effects of student-faculty interactions on minority students' college grades: differences between aggregated and disaggregated data. *The Journal of the Professoriate* 3(2), 137-160.
- Conrad, C., & Kim, M. M. (2006). The impact of historically Black colleges and universities on the academic success of African American students. 47(4), 399-427. doi:10.1007/s11162-005-9001-4
- Cuyjet, M. (1997). African American men on college campuses: their needs and their perceptions. *New Directions for Student Services*, 80, 5-16.
- Cuyjet, M. (2006). African American college men. *Twenty-First-Century Issues and Concerns*, 3-23.

- Dahlvig, J. (2010). Mentoring of African American Students at a predominantly White institution (PWI). *Christian Higher Education*, 369-395.
- Davis, R. J., Maramba, D. C., & Palmer, R. T. (2010). Role of an HBCU in supporting academic success for underprepared Black males. *Negro Educational Review*, 85-106.
- Digest of education statistics 2012*. (n.d.). Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_376.asp
- Fleming, J. (1976). *The lengthening shadow of slavery: A historical justification for affirmative action for Black in higher education*. Washington D.C.: Howard University Press.
- Fries-Britt, S., & Turner, B. (2002). Uneven stories: Successful Black collegians at a Black and a White campus. *The Review of Higher Education*, 25(3), 315-330. doi:10.1353/rhe.2002.0012
- Gasman, M., & Palmer, R. (2008). "It takes a village to raise a child": The role of social capital in promoting academic success for African American men at a Black college. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52-70.
- Grier-Reed, T. (2010). The African American student network: creating sanctuaries and counterspaces for coping with racial microaggressions in higher education settings. *Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*, 181-188.
- Harper, S. (2012). *Black male students success in higher education*. A report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study, University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education, Philadelphia .

- Harris, F. (1999). Centricity and the mentoring experience in academia: an afri-centric mentoring paradigm. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 23(4), 229-235.
- Holbert-Quince, J., Lacey, K., Owens, D., & Rawls, G. (2010). First generation African American males college students: implications for career counselors. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 291-300.
- Jenkins, T. S. (2006, September). Mr. nigger: The challenges of education Black males within American society. *Journal of Black Studies*, 37(1), 127-155.
doi:10.1177/0021934704273937
- Jett, C. C. (2013). HBCU propel African American male mathematics majors. *Journal of African American Studies*, 17, 189-205. doi:10.1007/s12111-011-9194-x
- Johnson-Bailey, J., & Cervero, R. (2002). Cross-cultural mentoring as a context for learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 96, 15-26.
- Kim, Y. K. (2010). Racially different patterns of student-faculty interaction in college: a focus on levels, effects, and causal directions. *The Journal of the Professoriate*, 3(2), 162-189.
- Krefting, L. (1991, March). Rigor in qualitative research: the assessment of trustworthiness. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 215-222.
- Lewis, K., Hagood-Elliott, K., Seepersad, R., & Strickland, S. (2007). Cross-cultural mentoring: exploration through the lens of African American students. *The Sixth Annual College of Education Research Conference: Urban and International Education Section*, (pp. 102-107). Miami. Retrieved from http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

- Lincoln, Y., & Stanley, C. (2005, March/April). Cross-race faculty mentoring. *Change*, 44-50.
- Majors, R., & Billson, J. M. (1992). *Cool Pose: The dilemmas of Black manhood in America*. Simon & Schuster.
- Maramba, D. C., & Palmer, R. T. (2010). African American male achievement: using a tenet of critical theory to explain the African American male achievement disparity. *Educatin and Urban Society*, 43(4), 431-450.
doi:10.1177?0013124510380715
- Nealy, M. (2005). Retrieved from Diverse Education:
<http://diverseeducation.com/article/12277/>
- Noguera, P. (1997). Reconsidering the "crisis" of the Black male in America. *Social Justice*, 24(2), 147-164. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29767012>
- Noguera, P. (2003, July 4). The trouble with Black boys: the role and influence of environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African American males. *Urban Education*, 38(4), 431-459.
- Ogbu, J. (2004). Collective identity and the burden of "acting White" in Black history, community, and education. *The Urban Review*, 36(1), 1-35.
- Patton, S. (2012, Novemebr 2). From cellblock to campus, one black man defies the data. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 59(10), B9-B13.
- Reio, J. T., & Robinson, D. M. (2011). Benefits of mentoring African American men. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 27, 406-421.
doi:10.1108/02683941211220207

- Rodgers, K. A., & Summers, J. J. (2008). African American students at predominantly White institutions: a motivational and self-systems approach to understanding retention. *Educational Psychology Review*, 171-190. doi:10.1007/s10648-0089072-9
- Shah, S., & Sato, G. (2012, October). Where do we go from here? Philanthropic support for Black men and boys. New York, New York.
- Smith, W., & Zhang, P. (2011). From high school to college: the transition experiences of black and white students. *Journal of Black Studies*, 42(5), 828-845.
- Strayhorn, T. J. (2008). The role of supportive relationships in facilitating African American males' success in college. *NASPA Journal*, 45.
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2009). The burden of proof: a quantitative study of high-achieving black collegians. *Journal of African American Studies*, 133(4), 375-387. doi:10.1007/s12111-008-9059-0
- Thomas, K., Willis, L., & Davis, J. (2007). Mentoring minority graduate students: issues and strategies for institutions, faculty, and students. *Equal Opportunities International*, 26(3), 178-192. doi:10.1108/02610150710735471
- Tuitt, F. (2012). Black like me: Graduate students' perceptions of their pedagogical experiences in classes taught by Black faculty in a predominantly White institution. *Journal of Black Studies*, 43(2), 186-206. doi:10.1177/0021934711413271

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Consent to Participant in Research

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

The perception of Black male students of Black male faculty/staff involvement in mentorship

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by B. James Griffin, Jr and Dr. Richard Roberts, from the Counseling and Student Development Department at Eastern Illinois University.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a student at Eastern Illinois University who identifies an African American male with 90 or more credits toward graduation.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study will be to examine the Black male's perception of the value of mentorship related to their experience at a higher education institution. Additionally, this study will seek to explore the perceptions of Black males who actually sought mentoring relationships at a predominantly White institution (PWI).

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an interview with the researcher
- Answer questions regarding subject matter
- You will be video recorded

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation of this study. All responses will remain confidential. You are not obligated to answer any questions that you are uncomfortable with

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There are no direct benefits to your participation in this study. The benefits would primarily be with the university and future Black males attending the university. The proposed study could assist in increasing the retention and graduation rates of Black males.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of data, paper copies of results, being concealed in a secure location and electronic records of data will be kept in a password protected computer in a private folder. All names mentioned during the interview including your own, will be replaced with a pseudonym. All video recordings will only be viewed by the primary researcher and faculty mentor Dr. Roberts for data analysis purposes only. All data collected for purposes of this study will be destroyed 3 years after the study is completed.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.

There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

B. James Griffin, Jr. (Principal Investigator) – bjgriffin@eiu.edu 217-512-1306

Dr. Richard Roberts (Faculty Sponsor) – rlroberts@eiu.edu 217-581-2400

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board

Eastern Illinois University

600 Lincoln Ave.

Charleston, IL 61920

Telephone: (217) 581-8576

E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix B
Interview Protocols

Interview Protocols

Research Questions

- I. **What is the value of mentorships related to attending a higher education institution?**
 1. How do you define mentorship?
 2. Have you ever been mentored in the past?
 - a. Describe that experiences
 3. Why do you think mentorship is important or not for Black males attending a PWI?

- II. **What factors lead Black male students to seek mentorships?**
 1. Who are people in your life that has been influential in your development?
 2. What difficulties if any did you experience when transitioning to college?
 - a. Who supported you through this transition?
 3. As a Black male student, are there any experiences you have encountered that can be viewed as being hostile or racially driven on campus?
 - a. If so, what are they?
 4. Is there anyone on campus you were able to speak to regarding you academic, personal or professional goals?
 - a. Who was this person?
 - b. What lead to your decision to seek assistance from an adult faculty or staff person?
 - c. What race was this faculty or staff person?
 5. How important is it for you to have someone to help guide and support you?
 6. Are there instances where you felt alone or ostracized while on campus?
 - a. If so, please describe them.
 7. Do you interact socially on the campus? Why or why not?

III. What are the perceived differences between mentorship with cross-race faculty/staff and Black male faculty/staff?

1. Do you feel comfortable seeking assistance from your White professors inside or outside of the classroom?
2. What differences have you noticed, if any, in faculty or staff interest in your success when they were Black or White?
3. What barriers, if any, exist that hinders your ability to create relationships with professors of another race?
4. Do you feel accepted by your college instructors?

IV. What is the Black males' perception of the role of mentorship to their success?

1. What role do you think faculty and staff play in the success of students?
2. What type of person typically seeks additional support and guidance while in college?
3. What factors contribute to your academic progress? Good or Bad.

Appendix C

Request for Participation

Greetings!

My name is B. James Griffin and you have been selected to participate in a research study about the involvement of Black faculty and staff in mentorship. The research conducted is a requirement for the *Masters of Science program in College Student Affairs* here at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. The information you provide will assist me in my graduate thesis research and add to the general discourse on the topic of Black males in higher education. This information will be used to aid professionals, educators, and policy makers as they seek to address issues of the disparity of Black males in higher education compared to their counterparts.

Your interview responses will be strictly confidential and data from this research will only be shared with administrators on campus. Your information will remain confidential. *Interviews will last approximately 45 minutes.* If you are interested in participating in this study please email bjgriffin@eiu.edu to set-up an interview.

If you have questions about this project, you may contact the course instructor, Dr. Richard Roberts at 217-581-2400, or at rlroberts@eiu.edu.

Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will not affect your current status or future relations with Eastern Illinois University.

Thank you very much for your time.

B. James Griffin, Jr., MBA

Principal Counselor/Advisor

TRiO/Student Support Services

S.T.R.O.N.G. MENtoring Advisor

EIUnity Diversity Group Advisor

Eastern Illinois University

3013 9th St. Hall

Phone: 217-581-7848

Email: bjgriffin@eiu.edu

The Only Difference Between A GOOD Day And A BAD Day Is Your Attitude! ~ Dennis Brown