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The Impact of Mentoring African Americans Males during Their Undergraduate Experience at Predominantly White Institutions

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Abstract

Mentoring is often described as a positively effective relationship socialized by a professor or faculty member that assists the student with academic and interpersonal endeavors (Lavant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). Black males face many obstacles in higher education that limit their abilities to obtain resources such as mentorship. The purpose of the present qualitative study was to examine the impact of mentoring relationships for African American males enrolled at a predominately White university. This study sought to explore if mentoring had an impact on Black males, what effects does mentorship have, how they describe their mentoring relationships, and how satisfied are Black males with their mentoring relationships. The research captured the experience of four participants. Results showed that mentoring has multiple impacts on Black males during their undergraduate experience. These mentoring relationships provided the participants with guidance, confidence, professional development, and connections to resources that helped them to be more successful during their undergraduate experience

Key words: *Mentorship, Black*, *PWI, Black Males*

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Chapter I

Introduction

In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity--it is a prerequisite.

-President, Barack Obama

Today, a college degree remains an important predictor of future economic success (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). However, degree attainment is not always equally accessible for every racial group. Although Black students are increasing their graduation rates in comparison to White students there remains a degree attainment gap (Postsecondary National Policy Institute [PNPI], 2019). This is especially true for Black males at predominantly White institutions (PWI) compared to their White counterparts (PNPI, 2019). In 2018 23% of the Black population aged 25 to 29 held a bachelor's degree or higher. Bachelor's degree attainment for Black students has increased more slowly than among White students (PNPI, 2019).

Between 2000-01 and 2015-16 academic year, the number of degrees for Black students increased (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2019). Black students increased their degrees almost 75% from 111,300 to 194,500, while White students increased their degrees almost 29% from 927,400 to 1.2 million. Furthermore, in comparison to Black male students for the 2015-16 academic year 44 % of White males obtained bachelor's degrees (NCES, 2019). During that same academic year, only 36 % of Black males obtained bachelor's degrees. Black students in higher education continue to be challenged with various factors that can hinder their overall success, such as degree attainment gap and discrimination.

Mentoring programs have been utilized at many colleges and universities to support minority students and to empower members of minority groups to enter college and seek success within higher education (Hicks, 2005). Mentoring is often described as a positively effective relationship socialized by a professor or faculty member that assists the student with academic and interpersonal endeavors (Lavant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). Mentoring in higher education for Black males has been considered valuable and effective in promoting interaction between student and faculty (Lavant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). Black males have been shown to benefit from the mentoring programs at different colleges and universities. A study conducted by Grant-Thompson, Sheila, Atkinson, & Donald (1997) examined the effects of mentor ethnicity, cultural sensitivity, and student level of cultural mistrust on perceptions of mentor credibility and cultural competence. Furthermore, Black professors make up only 4% of professors in America and even fewer of them are Black males (Allen, Bonous-Hammarth, Epps, Guillory, & Suh, 2000). As a result, this can be detrimental to the success of Black male students and their matriculation through to graduate and professional programs. Ultimately, the significance of this study revolves around effective mentorship. For Black students who are seeking motivation, social support, and emotional support, mentorship has been identified as helping in retention and degree attainment (Brittian, Sy, & Stokes, 2009).

Mentoring relationships are embedded in the educational process of higher education. Mentoring builds relationships with students, locates spaces where they get disconnected, and assist them with reconnecting when struggling (Drake, 2011). There are two main types of mentoring that can be used as solutions to reduce the degree attainment gap between Black and White students: formal and informal mentoring. Formal mentoring programs are structured, and they have specific objectives in accordance to building relationships with students (Larose,

Cyrenne, Garceau, Harvey, Quay, & Deschenes, 2009). Formal mentoring program components vary in terms of mentor training, activity type, and the interaction between student and mentor (Larose, et al., 2009). In a formal mentoring program, there are certain processes and activities that should take place to give the relationship the best chance for success (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). For example, Deloitte has a mentoring program that pairs employees from under-represented populations with mentors from the partner, principal, or director level who commit to at least two years (How to Engage your Employees: Start with an Online Degree, 2020). On the other hand, informal mentoring is considered a natural relationship between two people where one gains insight, knowledge, wisdom, friendship, and support from the other (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). Cotton and Ragins (1999) found that informal organizational mentoring is more beneficial than formal mentoring. Informal mentors can produce higher amounts of several types of career development functions, including coaching, providing challenging assignments, or increasing their student's exposure and visibility on campus.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the overall impact mentoring relationships had on African American males at a PWI. As I transitioned into my senior year of college, I had the opportunity to meet a person that changed my life. After gaining this mentor and realizing the positive impact on the end of my undergraduate experience, I became curious to how many other Black male undergraduates had similar experiences. The unique situation I experienced, was that my mentor was not a person of color. Grant-Thompson (1997) conducted a study that validated the need to increase our African American faculty in higher education for mentorship but suggested that White Americans can also be effective towards Black students if they are culturally responsive.

Research Questions

I sought to understand what role mentoring has in the success of Black male undergraduate students attending a PWI, and this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What effects does mentorship have on Black males at predominantly White institutions?
2. How do Black males describe their mentoring relationships?
3. How satisfied are Black males with their mentoring relationship?

Significance of the Study

In higher education, mentoring for Black males has been a valuable and effective means in promoting interaction between student and faculty (Lavant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997). According to Tinto (1993), student's interaction with faculty/staff is crucial with respect to their educational development in higher education. Mentorship has been known to be effective in student's retention and graduation rates. Furthermore, the motivation, social support, and emotional support that students often seek on campuses can be provided through mentorship (Brittian, Sy, & Stokes, 2009).

African American males experience consistently poor retention and graduation rates in universities (Brittian, Sy, & Stokes, 2009) even after the increase in enrollment. In the year 2000, the nationwide graduation rate for Black students was 37%, compared to 59% for White students (Cross & Slater, 2001). During the late 1990s, the enrollment rate for Black students in higher education continued to increase. However, their retention and completion rates did not. Black student enrollment remained underrepresented compared to White students in higher education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). In addition, a 2015 report released by

America's Promise Alliance expressed that in 2011-2012, the gap in the national graduation rate

for Black men and their peers widened. The results showed that graduation rates were 59% for

Black men, 65 % for Latinos and 80% for Whites (McBride, 2017). The percentage of Black

students increased from 10 percent in 1976 to 14 percent in 2017, but the 2017 percentage

reflects a decrease since 2011, when Black students made up 15 percent of all enrolled U.S.

residents (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019)

Limitations of the Study

Three limitations have been identified that may impact the information gathered from this

study. One would be not understanding my own biases as a researcher. As an African American

male and a student that knows the benefits of mentorship, this could be bias. To avoid this, my

study was constructed in a manner that did not allow my own identity to affect the results of the

study. For example, during the interviews and focus group my own thoughts and personal beliefs

were not considered when creating the interview protocol questions. Furthermore, to eliminate

any bias as a researcher some of my peers were asked to review my questions and identify any

biases they noticed.

My second limitation was finding willing participants who experienced mentoring during

their time at a PWI during COVID-19 and increased social distancing requirements. To

counteract this limitation there was another method used to determine who the participants could

be, such as contacting the advisor for STRONG Mentoring to recruit qualified participants. The

third limitation was my bias on the socioeconomic status of students that were interviewed. By

having biases against someone's socioeconomic status, there could be presumptions about their

beliefs, perceptions, and culture.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of definition or terms that are important to understanding the current study:

- **African American**. Someone who identifies or has been identified as Black American or of African descent. (Definition of African America, 2020)

- **Cross-race mentoring.** Mentoring that occurs when mentors of a specific race/culture serve as mentors to students of another race/culture (Grant & Ghee, 2015).

- **Formal mentoring.** Formal mentoring develops a program and process for mentoring to take place. The protégés are assigned or strongly encouraged to participate in formal mentoring. (Inzer & Crawford, 2005)

- **Historically Black College & University (HBCU).** A college or university that was originally founded to educate students of African American descent. (White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 2020)

- **Informal mentoring.** Informal mentoring is the natural coming together of a mentor and protégé. This is done in friendship, through personal and professional respect and admiration from each to the other. (Inzer & Crawford, 2005)

- **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 (University of Cambridge, 2019)

- **Mentor.** A process by which a person of experience counsels, guides, and facilitates the intellectual and/or career development of the protégé (Bottomley, 2016).

- **Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).** Any college / university with an enrollment of more than 50% Caucasian / European descent students. (Brown & Dancy, 2010).

- **Race.** The group a person belongs to as a result of a mix of features such as skin color and hair texture, which reflect ancestry and geographical origins, as identified by others, or self-identified (Liang & West, 2006)

- **Same-race mentoring.** Mentoring that occurs within the same racial and ethnic background (Spalter-Roth, Shin, Mayorova, & White ,2013)

Summary

This study focused on the effects mentoring has on Black male students attending a PWI. Chapter one provides an in-depth analysis of what information the reader can expect to receive from this study, the reason why the study is being conducted, and limitations that may be present in the study. Chapter one also provided details about the significance of the study and give insight to the overall problem. Chapter two provides a more detailed literature review about the history of Black Males in higher education, challenges Black males face in higher education, understanding mentoring, information on Schlossberg's Transition Theory (2006), and Chickering and Reisser's Theory of Identity Development (1993). Chapter three elaborates on the method in which the study was conducted.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact mentoring has on African American males at a PWI. Furthermore, this study focuses on various factors that can contribute to the impact mentorship has on African American males during their undergraduate experience. In this vein, this chapter presented a detailed review of the literature on related topic. This includes a history of African American males in higher education, challenges in that they face in higher education, as well as the literature surrounding mentorship, and mentorship effectiveness. It also features different types of mentoring such as natural mentoring, peer mentoring, and same race mentoring that could reinforce dropout and retention rates. The theoretical and conceptual framework that guided the study was also addressed.

History of African American Males in Higher Education

African American males have historically failed in higher education, encountering racism and various forms of oppression (Hall & Rowan, 2001). Education for African American males' dates to before the Civil War. As detailed by Hayes (2006), Blacks were introduced to the harsh realities of life in America with the arrival of the first slaves at Jamestown in 1619. Though slavery sought to deprive Blacks of the necessities of life including formal and informal education, slaves acquired knowledge and continued to educate themselves. Because of this, Black educational experiences have passed through multiple stages and each has been significantly changed in national policy and culture. However, while it's true that Black educational experiences have changed, it would take more than 200 years after the start of slavery in America before a Black student graduated from college. According to Hayes, the first Black student to graduate from a college in the United States was John B. Russworm. He

graduated from Bowdoin College in 1826. Russworm's graduation was a spark in African Americans graduating in higher education. Two more Black undergraduate students, Edward Jones and John Newton Templeton graduated between 1826-1828.

According to History.com (2018), although slavery was abolished in 1865, Blacks continued to be segregated without equal access to facilities, housing, education, and opportunities. Segregation is defined as requiring separate housing, education, and other services to people of color. Amongst Blacks and their families' segregation was administered through Black codes and the Jim Crow laws (History.com, 2018). Black codes were a replacement for slave codes, the restrictive and discriminatory laws that criminalized Blacks after slavery. Although the 13th amendment ended the slave economy, it also included provisions to arrest and imprison Blacks. For example, Blacks who were not employed could be arrested for vagrancy (Nittle, 2019). The codes also implied that Blacks were available for cheap labor. On the other hand, the Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation in the South between 1877-1950 (Urofsky, 2019). The Jim Crow laws had one of the largest impacts on Blacks in education because they were not allowed access to White schools, or schools with better opportunities. Segregation in public schools came to an end in 1954 by the United States Supreme Court. The court's decision ruled that all segregation in public schools was inherently unequal (Sinanan, 2016). According to Sinanan, this decision was extended to state-supported colleges and universities in 1956. Even after this ruling "Brown v Board of Education, 1954," African Americans would continue to face oppression. One example of this continued oppression was in 1957, when National Guard was called to prevent black students from attending a high school in Little Rock, Arkansas (History.com, 2018).

Challenges in Higher Education for African American Males

African American males encounter various forms of oppression in higher education that correlate with their dropout and graduation rates. Research by Hall and Rowan (2001) found that the issues and problems African American males face within higher education come from matters of race and discrimination. Educational institutions possess the power to encourage all students of all races, classes, and backgrounds to conform to the dominant culture (Sinanan, 2016). However, racism is embedded by deep-rooted cultural norms (Hall & Rowan, 2001), and has been a persistent impediment to the success of Black students attending PWIs (Feagin, Vera & Imani, 1996). This is important because many African American students are perceived differently because of their race. According to Hall and Rowan (2001), "they are valued less, educational personnel expect less of them and as a result all but the exceptional perform accordingly" (p.12). Black students enter traditionally White universities with the mindset of acceptance and equality (Suarez, Orellan, Portillo, Rowan, & Andrews, 2003). However, they are often met with discrimination and racism at their universities. A study by Fleming (2003) found that racial prejudice can lead to feelings of social alienation, and as a result creates a university experience that results in stress, anxiety, and poor academic performance.

In a survey conducted by Pew Research Center (2016), 81% of Blacks with college experience say they faced discrimination or had been treated unfairly because of their race or ethnicity. According to this Pew Research Center report some 55% of Blacks with at least some college education say that in the previous 12 months someone has acted as if they were suspicious of them because of their race or ethnicity. This is connected to discrimination because it is an example of how African American students are challenged in higher education. There were also times where I felt as if I were treated with suspicion due to my race. As a result, I

found it challenging to seek help from my White peers, teachers, and staff. As an undergrad

student, I felt out of place and I thought someone who was not the same ethnicity as me would

not be beneficial to me.

Institutional identity, campus connectedness and self-esteem

Institutional identity and self-esteem are critical in understanding Black male academic

behaviors in higher education. Thomas, et al. (2012) defined institutional identity as a

measurement for individuals to determine how they identify with the institution and how they

feel about the membership of the institution. For example, their study examined the relationship

between multiple dimensions of institutional identity and self-esteem. The study consisted of 411

Black male college freshmen. The researchers hypothesized that self-esteem is related to

institutional identity and that there would be no differences between self-esteem at Historically

Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) and PWIs. HBCU's are a source of accomplishment

and great pride for the African American community as well as the entire nation (White House

Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 2020). On the other hand, PWIs are

used to describe institutions of higher learning in which White's account for 50% or greater of

the student enrollment (Brown & Dancy II, 2010)

The results by Thomas et al., (2012) however showed that there was a relationship

between self-esteem and institutional identity. They administered the reports through an

institutional identity scale with three items per dimension and used a 7-point Likert response

scale (1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree). Dimensions used were belonging, public regard,

private regard, centrality, bonding, and self-esteem. Their results revealed that each dimension of

institutional identity was positively correlated with self-esteem. Ultimately, the "self- concept of

Black male freshmen at PWIs appears to be explained by an internalized appraisal of their

institution, while the opposite occurs in Black male freshmen at HBCUs" (Thomas et al., 2012 p.1).

Campus connectedness for Black students is impacted by their sense of belonging to their campuses. A study by Alien, Epps, and Haniff (1991) examined the impact of college racial composition on African American students' experiences in college. Their study was the National Study of Black College Students (NSBCS), which included more than 2,000 African American students and included eight HBCUs and eight PWIs. Throughout this study there was a significant finding- which indicated that many African American students perceived PWIs as socially isolating and alienating. However, in comparison to HBCU's the Black students reported that their campuses are welcoming and friendly. These researchers also found that Black students believed their PWIs were not reliable to their needs, dispositions, and/or abilities. Furthermore, their study also revealed that Black students felt that PWIs did not adequately seek to integrate them into the campus community and make them feel welcomed.

Based on evidence that students of color are frequently marginalized on their college campuses, a mixed-methods study examined the relationship between racial identity and campus connectedness in an ethnically diverse sample of Black college students (Thelamour, George, Ezeofor, 2019). The study included 345 participants who were African Caribbean and Black American college students who interviewed about their campus connectedness. Students across ethnic backgrounds reported higher feelings of closeness with their same-ethnic peers than those of different ethnicities. According to Thelamour et al., (2019) Black students in the sample were more socially connected to those of similar backgrounds than to their campuses overall. As a result, this study underscores the need to look at the ethnic diversity in the Black college student population and may offer colleges and universities development insight on how to best support

these students. Ultimately, campus connectedness is important for Black students who are

attending PWIs, it is important that institutions create and foster environments that support Black

students and make them feel comfortable.

Understanding Mentoring

Research has shown that African American males' benefit from having great mentoring

relationships. Mentoring is a system of structured guidance where one individual expresses their

knowledge, skills, and experience to help others to progress in their own lives and careers

(University of Cambridge, 2019). Mentoring is also defined as a one-on-one relationship that can

result in a person voluntarily giving their time to teach, support and encourage (Santamaria,

2003). Mentoring can often be confused with simply giving advice but there are more variables

that can impact mentorship. University of Cambridge (2019) states that mentoring is motivating

and empowering another person to help identify their own issues and goals. The following

section discusses the four main types of mentoring: natural mentoring, peer mentoring, same race

mentoring and cross-cultural mentoring.

Natural mentoring

A natural mentor is someone who identifies as a mentor rather than someone they are

paired with through mentoring programs (Bottomley, 2016). This means that the natural mentor

can be a teacher, coach, sibling, or even a neighbor. A study conducted by Dubois and

Silverthorn (2005) examined natural mentoring relationships and the impact they have on

adolescent health. Using a sample of 4,882 respondents selected randomly to determine whether

they had a mentoring relationship, they reported a mentoring relationship was more likely to

exhibit favorable outcomes relating to personal factors such as education/work. These factors

included completing high school, college attendance, working more than 10 hours a week and

reduced problem behavior (gang memberships, hurting others in physical fights, and risk taking).

The psychological well-being of adolescents is also affected by relationships that individuals

build with their mentors (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005). In a study by Davidson and Foster-

Johnson (2001) they stated that mentoring activities can be categorized into either psychosocial

or instrumental. Psychosocial activities address the personal needs of the mentee by providing

psychological or social support, and in some cases, both. The psychosocial activities should

provide the mentee with support to improve sense of self and their social interactions within the

environment. On the other hand, instrumental mentoring activities assist the mentee's

professional needs by providing access to career related services to enhance skills and

professionalism (Davidson, & Foster-Johnson, 2001).

Peer mentoring

Peer mentoring is an approach that provides mentoring to children and youth,

additionally peer mentoring provides leadership and development opportunities to the older or

near-peer youth who serve in the mentoring role (National Mentoring Resource Center, 2019,

pp.1). The notion of peer mentoring suggests an ongoing relationship whereby a "more

experienced student helps a less experienced student (mentee) improve overall academic

performance by providing advice, support, and knowledge" (Moschetti, Plunkett, Efrat, &

Yomtov, 2017, p. 2). As one progresses in life, colleagues can 'peer-mentor' each other either

areas (such as teaching observation or project management) or for general support (University of

Cambridge, 2019). This type of mentoring influences African American students who are not

able to experience having a peer mentor. Mentors with backgrounds, experiences, and cultural

values like their protégés are often in a better position to translate and transmit valuable

information or behaviors effectively (Morales, Ambrose-Roman, & Perez-Maldonado, 2016).

The National Mentoring Resource Center (2019) stated that "With having a peer mentor, the strongest effects for mentees appear to be increases in school attitudes (e.g., connectedness), relationships with adults (both teachers and parents) and peers, and improvements in internal affective states" (pp.1).

Same-race mentoring

Same- race mentoring is mentoring that occurs within the same racial and ethnic background (Grant-Thompson & Atkinson, 1997). Supporters of same-race mentors believe that racial and ethnic backgrounds play a huge part in forming an effective mentor-mentee relationship. It is believed that the mentoring match is incapable of achieving its full potential without a similar racial background (Rhodes, Reddy, Grossman, & Lee 2002). The mentoring of Black male students by other Black males is essential to the success of Black males in higher education. According to Liang and West (2006), cultural differences do influence the expectations for an experience of mentoring relationships. As a result, when youth had the opportunity to choose their own mentors, they preferred mentors from their own racial or ethnic background (Liang & West, 2006). Enge (2010) examined the impact Black alumni may have on the career development of African American undergraduate students attending predominantly White universities. The focus of the study examined how social integration is a part of same-race mentoring relationships. Enge, identified how students who engage in same-race mentoring programs experience increased opportunity for career development.

Cross-cultural Mentor Effectiveness

Carroll and Barnes (2015) examined the difficulty within cross-race mentorship in which mentors of that pairing tended to avoid conversations with mentees that are centered on race and how that approach serves as a barrier for a mentee's success and progression. However, Carroll

and Barnes created various broaching styles, both beneficial and detrimental, that would

potentially help mentors address difficult or sensitive topics, such as race, with mentees (2015).

According to their study, the broach styles included avoidant, isolating, incongruent, congruent,

and infusing. The first broach style avoidant is when the issue is being ignored and, their second

broach style is isolating, which withholds information based on fear of the mentee's reaction.

The third broach style is incongruent, which is a sense of openness but also lacks empathy,

followed by the fourth broach style congruent, which accepts and encourages mentees to

interpret their concerns based on cultural support. Finally, there is infusing, which is the attempt

to actively eliminate oppression and promote equity and fairness (Carroll & Barnes, 2015).

      A study conducted by Thompson and Atkinson (1997) examined the effects of mentor

ethnicity, cultural sensitivity, and student level of cultural mistrust on perceptions of mentor

credibility and cultural competence. Their study consisted of African American men attending

west coast community colleges. Black students, just as any other ethnicity require successful role

models that they can identify with to promote academic competence and self-esteem (Wiley,

1989). However, students attending a PWI has less chances of having a Black faculty/staff

member. A study from 1989 concluded that African Americans represented only 4.1 percent of

the full-time faculty nationally and comprised a mere 1.0% of total faculty at PWIs (Blackwell,

1989). These researchers believed that mentoring can be an effective strategy that enhances

educational opportunities for African American students.

      Counselor effectiveness studies show that Black students will "perceive a counselor who

is culturally responsive to be more culturally competent than one who is culturally unresponsive,

regardless of ethnicity" (Pomales, Claiborn, & La-Fromboise, 1986, p 122). Counselors who are

aware of ethic/cultural differences are perceived as credible sources of help by Black students

(Poston, Craine, & Atkinson, 1991). Thompson and Atkinson (1997) study results show that

there is a need for African American faculty but suggest that White Americans can also be

effective towards Black students if they are culturally responsive. Furthermore, their research

indicates that mentor ethnicity, mentor cultural sensitivity, and student level of mistrust all play a

role in how Black male students perceive a faculty mentor. Their findings also suggest that

White American faculty can enhance their cross-cultural competence by responding to the

cultural content of their Black student's comments or concerns.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

Understanding the theoretical frameworks and how they are used are very important for

the overall research. In this section there will be two different theories used, Schlossberg's theory

of transition, and Chickering and Reisser's theory of identity development. Primarily, these

theories will focus on the impact that both theories can have on mentoring African Americans at

predominately white institutions.

Schlossberg's theory of transition

This theory focuses on how transition affects African American students and their

mentorship. A transition is defined as any event, or non-event that results in changed

relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson 2006).

Schlossberg's theory of transition is important because it examines the different factors that can

impact a student's transition to college. Research conducted by Evans, Forney, and Debrito

(1998), found a student's transition is influenced by ratio of assets and liabilities (regarding four

sets of factors): situation, self, support, and strategies. When examining a situation, the following

factors are essential: trigger, timing, control, role change, duration, previous experience,

concurrent stress, and assessment (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Self focuses on

two categories: personal demographics and psychological resources. Goodman, Schlossberg, and

Anderson (2006) explained that personal and demographics include socioeconomic status,

gender, and age. While psychological resources include ego development, outlook, commitment,

values, spirituality, and resilience (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006).

Chickering and Reisser's Theory of Identity Development

The theory of identity development uses seven vectors to explain how individuals

develop their identities. The seven vectors of identity development include: developing

competency, managing emotions, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing

identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The first

vector is developing competency. There are three different types of competencies that college

students develop, including intellectual, manual skills, and interpersonal competences.

Intellectual competence refers to the ability to understand and analyze content. Manual

competence refers to physical ability used to accomplish tasks, where interpersonal competence

refers to working and establishing relationships with others.

The second vector is managing emotions. In this vector it is important for students to

recognize the balance between self-awareness and self-control of their emotions. When students

can manage their emotions, they can accomplish this vector. The third vector is the movement

through autonomy toward interdependence. Students must learn to function on their own and

take accountability for themselves. In this vector there are two independences student must find:

emotional and instrumental. Emotional independence is the ability to willingly risk relationships

in exchange for pursuing their own individual interest. While instrumental independence is the

ability to solve problems with no assistance. The fourth vector is the development of mature

interpersonal relationships. To achieve this vector, one must have the ability to be intimate and

the ability to accept and celebrate unique differences. While students transition through college, they will encounter individuals who are different from them in ethics, values, and culture.

The fifth vector focuses on the establishment of identity. Development in this vector establishes how an individual is perceived by others. Ultimately, the formation of one's identity can lead to a sense of contentment with oneself and how that self is seen by others. The sixth vector is developing purpose. While college students begin to think about their reasons for attending college and their plans for after they graduate, they move into this vector of purpose. Through their college experiences students can also develop a sense of purpose. The final vector is the development of integrity. The establishment of integrity is the ability for students to assemble and practice the values that are consistent with their own beliefs (Chickering, 1969). These seven vectors are used as a resource tool to help students where they are and with what direction they are trying to get to. (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering's theory has increased importance to theoretical and practical understandings of student development and student success (Ortiz, 1999).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the impact mentoring has on African American students at a PWI. This chapter also highlighted that there are various phenomena and factors that explain a role of mentoring, and how Black males can encounter multiples forms of oppression in higher education. Chickering and Reisser's (1993) Theory of identity development, and Schlossberg's theory of transition were explored to provide insight to the reason why mentoring can impact the experiences of Black male students. McKay and Estrella (2008) stated that students who develop mentoring relationships with faculty are more satisfied with their college experience than those who don't. Ultimately, for Black males to succeed at PWIs,

schools need to promote and nurture supportive environments from staff and faculty. (Sinanan,

2016).

Chapter III

Methods

This chapter explores the qualitative methods of this study to understand the impact

mentoring can have on Black male's experiences while attending a PWI. The objective was to

explore whether there are factors pertaining to mentoring that effects Black male's experience

such as types of mentoring and cross- cultural mentor effectiveness. This study examined if there

was a relationship that Black male undergraduate experiences were impacted by mentorship. The

three research questions that will guide this study through one on- one interviews, and a focus

group will be used to get the perceived experiences of the participants.

Design of Study

This study included a qualitative approach to assess the mentoring experiences for Black

males. For this study, qualitative methodology was chosen over quantitative because qualitative

research provides the researcher with more in-depth details about their mentoring experiences.

Qualitative research includes details about human behavior, emotion, and personality

characteristics that that quantitative studies cannot provide (Madrigal & McClain, 2012). This is

generally achieved through one-on-one interviews and focus groups, which, according to Hall

and Harvey (2018) allow participants to speak dynamically and extensively about a given topic.

Qualitative research also enables the research to examine quality of information rather than the

quantity (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011) by collecting a detailed record and analysis of each

participant's account. Furthermore, sample sizes of qualitative studies are usually small because

the intention is not to ensure that the sample reflects the population, but rather to ensure the

sample reflects the range and scope of perspectives and experiences of different people with

varying backgrounds, opinions, and conditions (Hall & Harvey, 2018). Qualitative research

studies investigate the quality of relationships and situations within the data. As a result, there is

a greater emphasis on describing the information (Fraenkel et al., 2011). During this study, semi-structured interviews and a focus group were conducted with Black males who have experienced mentoring to gain personal knowledge about their mentoring experiences.

Participants

The target population for this study was Black males who attend a public mid-sized PWI. To be an eligible participant in the study the participants were identified as: (1) Black or African American, (2) male, (3) and an undergraduate student attending a PWI. For this study a list of students who fit the description was provided. The list was provided by the Executive Director of the Office of Inclusion and Academic Engagement. Participants in this study were contacted via email, following their emails they were asked to set up an interview time. For those students who participated, they were consulted to see if they knew of any other potential subjects for the study. Although this was my preferred method of contact there were a few anticipated problems with this as well. For example, students not being available for interviews, students not responding to emails, and students who just simply did not want to participate in the study.

Furthermore, this study examined students who are currently or previously enrolled in the S.T.R.O.N.G (Successful Teaching Relative to Overcoming Negative Generalities) mentoring program. This program is a residence-based program that serves 20-25 African American male students. The purpose of the S.T.R.O.N.G mentoring program is to stimulate the minds of our Black male students, create environments to increase opportunities and increase their overall academic abilities. After contacting the coordinator for S.T.R.O.N.G mentoring program, he provided me with a list of students who met the requirements for the study.

The participants who consented to this study include four Black male students with ages between 20-21 years. The participant's class rankings were all juniors. The four participants were similar in many areas and a description of participants is in Table 1 below:

Participant	Academic Class Rank	Semester Started	On-Campus Housing	First-Generation Status
Participant 1	Junior	FA18	Resident Hall	First Generation
Participant 2	Junior	FA18	Greek Court	First-Generation
Participant 3	Junior	FA18	Resident Hall	Non-First Generation
Participant 4	Junior	FA17	Resident Hall	Non-First Generation

Research Site

During the time of data collection, the student enrollment was about 7,600 students (Eastern Illinois University, n. D). The institution is in a rural community with an estimated total population of about 20,200 residents (United States Census Bureau, 2018). Out of those students enrolled about 19% are African American and roughly 68% are White (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019). This location was chosen for convenience since the researcher is a student at the institution and has access to the target population.

Instrument

In qualitative research, and for this study, the data collection instrument is typically the researcher who uses semi-structured or open-ended questionnaires and interview protocols. For this study the researcher served as the interviewer, and therefore was also considered the data collector. This method was chosen because it is the most appropriate for this specific research project to collect and analyze the quality of mentoring relationships for Black male students.

Open-ended questions. Before the participants were interviewed during their one-on-one, they were asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions. The questions intended to gain descriptions of their experiences with mentoring at PWIs. Furthermore, participant's responses to these questions allowed the researcher to develop more in-depth questions during the one-on-one interview process. This process included the student accepting a Zoom invitation and conducting a private/confidential conversation that lasted 20-30 minutes. An example of an open-ended question that was asked was: How would you describe your mentor relationships on campus? Another example would be: What are some of your experiences with cross cultural mentor effectiveness? A complete list of these questions can be found in (Appendix B).

Focus groups. Focus groups are used for collecting similar data from multiple participants at once. A focus group is a guided discussion, monitored and recorded by a researcher. Focus groups are generally useful in collecting a clear understanding of participant's experiences and beliefs. (Morgan, 1998). For this study a virtual focus group was conducted to examine whether black males had similar experiences with mentorship. Prior to conducting the focus groups, emails were sent to each selected participant requesting demographic information and an overview of their experiences with mentoring. Close ended question was asked when collecting the demographic information. However, all other questions were open-ended, and this

allowed participants to elaborate on their experiences more in depth. The questions that were

asked was a combination of focus group questions and the interview protocol questions. The

following were: (1) Please describe what you are getting out of your mentor experience

regarding academics, personal and social aspects? (2) What skills do you feel you have

developed/grown within your mentor experience? (3) What are the most valuable experiences

you had within the mentoring relationship? (4) What is your overall impression about your

mentoring experiences? (5) Describe the nature of the connections you have with your mentors.

(6) How could you relate your mentor relationship at EIU with other relationships that you have?

(7) Describe any experiences with mentoring programs before EIU? (8) Could you describe how

your relationship has shown progress or developed? Out of the four participants who decided to

participate in the focus group, only three participants were present on the day the focus group

was conducted. As a result, there was a limited number of responses that were received as

opposed to what was projected from the study.

Data Collection

For data collection the researcher interviewed participants through semi structured, one-

on-one interviews, using open ended questions and focus groups. Due to the COVID-19

pandemic, the United States has been required to practice social distancing, so the interviews

were conducted via Zoom. The interviews lasted between 20-30 minutes, and the locations of the

interviews were all completed in discreet areas and away from distractions. During the collection

process the interviews were video/audio recorded and transcribed. To ensure the privacy of the

interview, the researcher emailed each participant with a link that only they had access to prior to

the meeting. Ultimately, the transcripts were used to find similarities and differences in student's

experience with mentoring. Participants were also given pseudonyms to maintain their

confidentiality such as "Participant One".

Data Analysis

The researcher reviewed each interview recording and analyzed the data through

transcripts. This procedure was conducted by listening to each audio recording of the interviews.

The researcher recognized a trend of data through the participant's responses. Qualitative

analysis was then applied to examine if there were patterns and relationships of similar

mentorship experiences. This was conducted by using open coding. In the process of open

coding, the concepts emerge from the raw data and are later grouped into conceptual categories

(Strauss & Corbin 1990.) This process is aimed at identifying concepts or key ideas that are

hidden within textual data, which are potentially related to the phenomenon of interest. Once a

basic set of concepts are identified, these concepts can then be used to code the remainder of the

data, while simultaneously looking for new concepts and refining old concepts (Strauss & Corbin

1990).

Treatment of Data

Participant produced data was handled per IRB protocol to endure confidentiality. All

information that was collected was secured on the researcher's flash drive and person computer.

The data contained was only accessible by the researcher's password. The transcribed data and

information obtained will be deleted within three years after the study is complete.

Summary

This chapter explained the qualitative research method that was used to manage research

for this study. All participants of the study were purposefully selected to ensure the intent of the

study. Each participant participated in a semi-structured Zoom interview and a focus group to

provide observations and qualitative data on mentoring experiences for Black males at a PWI.

Chapter IV will discuss the findings of the interviews and focus group.

Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of mentoring African American males during their undergraduate experience at PWIs. The collected interview and focus group data were analyzed qualitatively and synthesized to understand how they address these three research questions: what effects does mentorship have on Black males at predominantly White institutions? How do Black males describe their mentoring relationships? And how satisfied are Black males with their mentoring relationship? Furthermore, the research questions that guided this study were listed in the interview guide protocols that shows how each interview question was related to the research questions (Appendix B). This chapter discusses the findings from the study through the voice of four Black male students at a PWI.

The Effect of Mentoring on Black males

To analyze the following research questions, each of the four participants were asked to share a story or a time when their mentor made an impact in their life during their undergraduate experience. They were also asked to talk about what ways their mentors challenged and supported them. Furthermore, they were asked if they believed that race plays a factor in mentoring. Throughout the interviews and focus groups, themes emerged in their responses; not all experiences showed commonalities, but experiences with White mentors, being challenged and supported by mentors, progression within their relationships, and race as a factor in mentoring relationships each stood out thematically.

Research Question #1: What effects does mentorship have on Black males at predominantly White institutions?

Research question number one asked what effects mentorship has on Black males at predominantly White institutions. One participant felt that his mentor guided him and provided opportunities for him to develop. Participant one and two both described their mentor was someone who challenges and advocates for them. They also said that their mentor supported them mainly by being there for them when they need/needed someone to talk to.

Growth from mentorship

In order to understand the participant's growth from their mentorship, it was important to gain a better understanding of what they are getting out of their mentor experiences. In reference to research question one, what effects mentorship has on African American males at PWI's. Each participant was asked to describe what skills they feel like they have developed from the experience and what valuable experiences they had with their mentors. There were some similarities in how participants responded and how they described their development.

Development in mentoring relationships. Although understanding the growth from mentorship was not a research question from the interviews it connected well to my first research question on what effects mentorship has on African American males at PWIs. Each participant in the focus group was asked to please describe what they are getting out of their mentor experience, and although participants had different responses, three themes emerged: confidence, professional development, and connections.

Confidence. When asked to describe what they are getting from the mentoring experience, confidence was one of the most common themes that emerged. For example, participant three stated:

Basically, what I get out of my mentoring experience, was that I feel like kids don't understand that people in this world are actually on their sides and have been through

some of the same stuff they have. And when kids understand that at young age it gives

them confidence and aspirations in life, knowing they can do what they set their minds to

do. Having that constant reminder of someone you look up to open a lot of doors

mentally.

And participant four shared:

First off, confidence is one of the main things and to add to that comfortability, just

knowing you have that person. A safe space also makes your experience more

comfortable, just knowing you can always go to someone and be open, even if they don't

have nothing to say they will just listen to you with no judgement.

Following participant four's response, participant one had a similar response as well, he stated:

I wanted to say the same thing, basically having someone that'll give you the chance is

what I am getting out of my mentor experience.

Professional development. Professional development was another common theme that

emerged during our focus group discussion. To understand the development of the participants

through their mentoring experiences they were asked to describe what skills they developed,

participant one stated:

I would say leadership skills and probably how to talk to people the right way. From my

dad personally he always taught me that there is a proper way to talk to people to make

yourself sound smart, even if you're not smart. It's like a certain way to address people to

get you point across.

Participant three also spoke about communication as a theme in his development thus far through

his mentoring experiences. He also shared:

Basically, about the communication, my mentor taught me that it's not what you say but how you say it. For example, if you come off to someone as aggressive you might mean right but they're not going to get that message just because of your tone and how you are addressing them. Another thing my mentor was big on, was knowing what's important. So, your friends partying and all that stuff, that's going to always be there but like your grades and college and stuff you only get a certain amount of time to do what you need to do. So, focusing on what's important and making that your priority.

And participant four elaborated on how his mentor made him a better student by teaching him organization and time management skills. He described:

Something that I would say I have developed is time management and organization. I feel like my mentor really just helped me figure out how to organize and manage my time basically. And it's been that way my whole college experience.

Connections. Connections was the final theme that emerged from the description of the nature of the growth from their mentoring relationships. This theme also addressed in my second research question; how Black males describe their mentoring relationships. Each participant provided a description of this connection. Participant one stated:

My connection with my mentor I feel like it was unexpected at first. As I gradually talked to them, I got in the role that they actually care about me and what I am trying to do with my life. I had times where I felt like this school stuff wasn't for me, but that person opened my eyes and they told me where my work ethic was, and I saw it for myself. So, the connection we had was very motivating.

Participant four also stated:

I would say that my connection is pretty deep me and my mentor have similar

personalities and decision-making, so were kind of on point most of the time. Even when

I am in the wrong sometimes, we have that level of respect to hold each other

accountable. I feel like it's a respectable deep connection we have.

Following participant four's response, participant three responded similarly stating:

Yeah, my connection is pretty deep too. Like I told you during the one-on-one interview

he's like a family friend, so I call him "uncle" and I've known him my entire life. We still

talk to this day but our connection it's a lot deeper than just the mentoring aspect.

Research Question #2: How do Black males describe their mentoring relationships?

Research question number two asked how Black males described their mentoring

relationships. Participants felt that their mentoring relationships were supportive of their

personal, social, and academic endeavors. Participant one described the relationship that he had

with his mentor as a steppingstone for getting through college. Participant one also described his

relationship to be very close with one another, stating that he would have never gained the

resources he did without the support and connections his mentor provided.

Being challenged and supported by mentors. During the interview each participant was

asked to talk about the details of how they were challenged and supported by their mentors. They

were also asked to describe if their mentors supported them socially and academically.

Participant one described his father as someone who has supported him during the three years he

has been in college. He talked about how his father challenges him to be the first one in his

family to earn a degree. He also stated:

My dad challenges and supports me because he used to be in college, but he dropped out

after his freshman year. He always challenged me to just be better than him. It's not like a

tough love or anything like that but he supports me and what I want to do. He wants me

to be better than he was. Like as a parent, I think that all parents want their kids to be

better than them.

Participant three also mentioned that his mentor supported and challenged him all throughout

middle school, high school, and college. Participant three described how this was impactful for

him growing up because it opened many opportunities for him to have access to resources and

connections at a young age. He also believed that his mentor always had the best intentions for

him, which made him strive to be better, he shared:

He challenges me just from expectations he has for me, I guess that's the biggest

challenge not wanting to let someone down that you care about. Also, he constantly

checks on me to make sure I am staying on track and not falling behind in my classes.

During the interview participant four also had a similar response to participant three and the

experiences he had with challenge and support. Participant four spoke about how he did not have

any mentorship experiences until he came to college. When describing how his mentor supported

and challenged him he stated:

It's a constant challenge. He's always making sure that I am at my best and that I am

doing everything that I put my mind to. So, he's like the big brother, the big brother who

doesn't let you slack and doesn't always tell you everything you want to hear. He also

challenges me to work on my time management skills by creating calendars and

reminders to keep up with work.

Mentorship progression. All four participants throughout the interview discussed how they

believe their mentoring relationship has progressed. When the participants were asked how their

mentoring relationships showed signs of progress, there were some commonalities and differences as well. The participants indicated that their relationships got stronger over time. They all described the depth of the mentor relationship they had and what areas they progressed in. Participant one shared:

> When I first started talking to her, I wasn't as open as I am with her now. Like I can pick up the phone and talk to her about something serious, but I feel like when I first met her I didn't have that open relationship. It's built over the last two years that she has been here. We talk about many topics, not just mentoring topics, topics about the world. And I get her opinions and she get mine. We feed off of each other a little bit.

During the interview participant four shared how his mentor and their relationship initially started out and the importance of communication. Participant four describes that his relationship progression mainly was the communication between each other. He stated:

> It's definitely shown a lot of progress, just through the communication. Freshman year it was more him talking trying to get me to open up. As we grew and got closer, I started opening up, sometimes we would spend the whole time with just me talking. So there's a balance in the communication aspect.

The other two participants who indicated that their relationship showed signs of progression expressed that their relationship shows signs of progression through how their mentors talked to them and the amount of time they spend talking with them. The fourth vector in Chickering's identity development is the development of mature interpersonal relationships. To achieve this vector, one must have the ability to be intimate and the ability to accept and celebrate unique differences. Participant three elaborated on the relationship that he has with his mentor and spoke about how as he got older the conversations that he had with his mentor

developed more mature. For example, he spoke about a time when his mentor was explaining to him what it means to be a Black male in society today and the things he needs to know, to survive as a Black male. He also stated:

> It's gotten stronger over time, simply because it's easier to connect with someone who is not a kid. Like the older I got, the closer we became. He would talk to me differently from when I was a kid.

Participant two also elaborated on how effective their progression within their relationship. He shared with me how often he and his mentor met up and how their conversations starting off small and closed in. However, he expressed that as they met more often their meetings would become longer and their conversations would expand further than mentoring topics. He stated:

> Oh man, I definitely believe that our relationship has gotten stronger since we first met. During our first couple of meetings, I would be closed off and my mentor would try to get me to open up more, but I was not comfortable at that time. However, as we met more and became closer, I was able to open up about more personal factors in my life and also just different topics that I wanted my mentor's opinion on. I would definitely say that our communication was the biggest part of my progression in our relationship.

Research Question #3: How satisfied are Black males with their mentoring relationship?

Research question number three asked how satisfied are Black males with their mentoring relationships. Participants three and four expressed that they are satisfied with their mentors who identify as Black but were not comfortable or open with their academic advisors who served as their mentors who were White. However, participants one and two said that they were very satisfied with their mentors who identified as White. One of the things that all four

participants agreed upon was that they felt their mentoring relationships were successful and described them as satisfying.

Race as a factor in mentoring. To understand if race plays a factor in mentoring, all four participants were asked to discuss their perspectives on race with respects to their mentors. The participants all had a response that affirmed the importance of race. Particularly the participants discussed race from two different perspectives: in favor of cross-cultural mentoring and in favor of Black-only mentoring. Two of the four participants presented similar thoughts about cross cultural effectiveness. They both elaborated on how they believed that race played a factor in mentoring, they believed that mentoring could be for anyone regardless of race. Both participants also discussed how cross-cultural mentoring can create opportunities. Participant one stated:

> Yes, I do because when I first came here, I was not exposed to any Black mentors, or I did not see people in faculty/staff positions who were Black. This made me think that I would not open up to someone who did not look like me or understood me. However, I found this to not be true when I discovered my current mentor who is a White woman.

Participant two also shared similar thoughts, however he described race being a supporting factor for specific populations that have mentoring placed upon them. He stated:

> I would say yes, it's probably opened more doors for me for mentoring opportunities. But I believe that mentoring is a universal thing but at the same time, some mentoring programs are geared towards certain groups, like Gateway program, TRIO and things like that. It's kind of half and half.

The other participants, participants three and four, had different responses to this question when I asked them to describe if race plays a factor, as they both elaborated on not having any

experiences with White mentors. Both participants described that they primarily did not feel comfortable having someone who was White as their mentors. They explained that the main reason for this was lack of understanding and lack of cross-cultural effectiveness, participant three stated:

> 100 percent it does, as much as people try to say it's not but it definitely is. Like a White male is not going to have the same experiences as me and you. Just because of the color of our skin. It's the type of society we live in, it's the sad truth.

And participant four shared:

> Yes, I don't have a thing against White people or having a White mentor. I guess you go where you are comfortable and were you feel like people will understand you. So I just feel like that attracted me to more people of my color who understand where I come from, especially at this type of institution that's majority White.

White mentors. Participants discussed how they had experiences with White mentors and how that affected them during their time at a PWI. Out of the four participants interviewed, two participants identified their mentors as a White woman and the other two had no experiences at all with White mentors. Participant one, opened up about the relationship he fostered with his Assistant Resident Director in his residence building and the opportunities she provided him while she was his mentor. He stated:

> My sophomore year here, my mentor hired me to be a desk assistant and I was having a bad year. Um I had experienced a loss and school was hard for me and my mentor knew, she could tell that something was off with me. She was able to make a connection with me and let me know that I can talk to her about whatever. She was there to listen and to help

and ever since she's been helping me with classes, and I'll talk to her about certain things

that's going wrong and what I need to work on. Then she asks me what I want to do and

how it will benefit me. So, it's like she pushes me to do better.

Participant two also mentioned that his mentor guided him and provided opportunities for them

to develop. During the interview participant two opened up about the relationship that he has

with his mentor and how she supported him during a difficult time. He shared that:

It was December 2019 and I was in my mentor's office and we were just having a deep

conversation. Like my mental health wasn't very good…well at the time I was going

through a lot of crap and she was like "You got to get your stuff together", and you know

that day those words hit different. And that was when we started creating the one-on-one

meeting on a monthly basis. During that time my mentor was one of the biggest

advocates I had and being able to have somebody see where I been and where I am right

now is pretty nice.

Summary

Chapter IV provided analysis of the research questions that structured this study.

Participants were given the opportunity to reflect on their mentoring experiences and how it

impacted them throughout their time at a PWI. Throughout the interviews and focus group each

participant had different experiences, however, there were some commonalties in their

experiences. The results found in this chapter will be clarified in the discussion section in

Chapter V.

Chapter V

Discussion, Recommendations, Conclusion

This research study looked at the impact of four students and their experiences with mentorship while at a predominantly White mid-sized Midwestern public institution. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact mentoring has on African American males at a PWI, as well as exploring the impact on their experiences during their undergraduate. This study showed how students who are involved with mentoring relationships can impact their overall experience of undergraduate. Four students who had been involved with mentoring relationships or programs during their undergraduate experience including informal relationships, and formal programs such as the S.T.R.O.N.G (Successful Teaching Relative to Overcoming Negative Generalities) mentoring program were interviewed and asked to respond to prompts (Appendix B) around the following research questions: (1) What effects does mentorship have on Black males at predominantly White institutions? (2) How do Black males describe their mentoring relationships? (3) How satisfied are Black males with their mentoring relationship? This chapter discusses the findings of the study, implications, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The four African American males included in the present study provided similarities and differences on perspectives for their mentoring experiences. Throughout the study all participants' experiences with their mentors were positive and conclusive to their development. While there were some commonalties, they were also unique. Seven themes emerged from the findings: (1) confidence; (2) professional development; (3) connection with mentors; (4) being challenged and supported by mentors; (5) mentorship progression; (6) race as a factor in mentoring relationships; and (7) experience with White mentors.

Growth from mentorship. In response to the first research question, the results revealed that there indeed is an effect from mentoring Black males at PWIs. Three different themes emerged from this section that guided the study: confidence, professional development, and connections with mentors. Participants described their confidence as one of the effects from their mentoring relationships, stating that confidence was something they lacked prior to their mentoring relationships. The participants also elaborated on how not having confidence impacted them negatively. The study showed that students gained confidence from their experiences with their mentors. This confidence was not only utilized in their ability to connect and speak with their mentors but transitioned to other parts of their lives as college students. The study also found that through the confidence they gained, it inspired some participants to consider job opportunities and internships.

This study found that through the interactions and experiences with their mentors the participants were also able to gain professional development skills. The students in this study all expressed that they felt like they gained some type of professional development skills that made them better students. For example, one participant described how he struggled with time management and communication skills. The participant and his mentor continually worked on his time management skills by challenging him to create calendars and reminders to keep up with his work. The mentor also persuaded the student to practice speaking out more in class when he felt comfortable, because this was difficult for the student it took time. However, the participant described that after the first year of their mentoring relationship he felt better prepared with time management and more comfortable conversing with his mentor. Another participant spoke about the professional skills they gained from their mentor as well. This participant stated that his mentor taught him how to address/speak to someone in a professional environment. He

elaborated on how important it was to address someone in a professional manner, or else you could be misinterpreted or perceived wrong. The professional skills that the student gained are a part of Chickering's vector one developments. The first vector is developing competency, within this vector there are three different competencies, including intellectual, manual skills, and interpersonal competences. For this participant, what he described from his mentoring relationship was interpersonal competence. Interpersonal competence refers to working and establishing relationships with others. While the participant gained professional skills from their mentor, they also develop personal skills in establishing relationships in professional environments.

Furthermore, this study also found that the participants were able to make connections with their mentors and describe the depth of those connections as well. The participants in the study had common responses to how they made the connections with their mentors. Similarly, each participant described how when they initially discovered their mentor, the relationship was not strong and connected at all. One participant described the connection with their mentor as an evolving relationship. This student shared that during the first semester that he and their mentor met, was very short meetings and straight to the point type of conversations. However, after a year or so the student said that the relationship with his mentor completely changed. The participant described that the relationship went from mainly the mentor talking and asking questions, to the mentee controlling most of their conversations. As a result, the student believed that over time he and his mentor were able to make a strong connection with one another and create a tight bond between the two. This also was another example of Chickering's interpersonal competency.

In keeping with prior research, according to Mertz (2004), the ability to have someone more seasoned or experienced (such as a faculty member) to draw knowledge from is considered an advantage with mentoring. In the study the four participants described having their mentor as someone who was an advantage for them. The participants reported that their transition into college was difficult, but also noted that their mentors were important to their overall success and transitions. Furthermore, the participant's experiences with transition into college were documented in Schlossberg's theory of transition in chapter 2. This theory focused on how transition effects African American males and their mentorship. Research conducted by Evans, Forney, and Debrito (2010), found a student's transition is influenced by ratio of assets and liabilities regarding four sets of factors: situation, self, support, and strategies.

Participants revealed that they experienced role change when comparing their experiences to the situation factor, stating that the role of becoming a mentee was a process and as a result this impacted their mentoring relationships. The participants looked at the self-factor for transition and concluded that personal and demographics such as socioeconomic status, gender and age all affect their mentoring experiences. Participants in the present study acknowledged the significance of having a mentor, suggesting that they have knowledge regarding academic support resources. Furthermore, support and strategies were the other two transition factors that the participants believed impacted them the most. By having a support system that is specifically targeted towards your overall success, students can grow and develop through their mentoring relationships. The participants also described strategies as an important factor, because if your mentor has a strategy for how they will assist and guide you, the mentoring relationship is likely to be more successful and stronger.

Describe mentoring relationships. The second research question of this study aimed to find how the participants described their mentoring relationships. Participants described their mentoring relationships to all be supportive of their personal, social, and academic endeavors. This study found that being challenged and supported was one of the most common ways they described their mentoring relationships. When looking at Schlossberg's transition theory, factors such as self and social support were examined to describe their mentoring relationships. In Schlossberg's transition theory self is personal and demographic characteristics that affect how an individual views life, such as socioeconomic status, gender, age, stage of life, state of health, and ethnicity. On the other hand, social support includes having intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends and institutional & community support (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson 2006).

One participant expressed that the support he received from his mentor was impactful for him throughout college because it opened many opportunities for him to have access to resources and connections at a young age. Another participant also described that the academic support he received from his mentor was one of the most impactful for him because he always struggled with finding and utilizing academic resources. Students in this study also thought that their mentors influenced their personal and social endeavors through the mentoring relationships they had. The study revealed that each participant felt like their mentors supported them through a personal situation that happened while they were in school. Each participant described that during that personal time, their mentors advocated for them and assured them that they were there if they needed them. This also was another example of Schlossberg's transition theory and one of the factors, situation. In situation, there can be a variety of influences on a person's ability

to transition, during this study the participants described different situations where the transition was unexpected, and their mentors supported them.

       Satisfaction with mentoring relationships. The third research question sought out to find how satisfied Black makes were with their mentoring relationships. The study revealed that two of the four participants expressed that they are satisfied with their mentors who identify as Black. However, they explained that they were not comfortable or open with their academic advisors who served as their mentors who were White. On the other hand, the other two said that they were very satisfied with their mentors who identified as White. This study found that the two participants who were not satisfied with their mentors were simply not comfortable and believed that their White mentors were not effective. The two participants expressed that the lack of Black figures on campus was another reason they were not comfortable with their White mentors. As stated earlier, Black students, just as any other ethnicity require successful role models that they can identify with to promote academic competence. However, students attending a PWI have less chances of having a Black faculty/staff member. For the other two participants that identified their mentors as White, they expressed how they did not care about the ethnicity of their mentor if they were beneficial to them. These two participants also said they felt like their mentors understood them and could relate to some of the issues they had going on. As previously stated, counselor effectiveness studies show that Black students will "perceive a counselor who is culturally responsive to be more culturally competent than one who is culturally unresponsive, regardless of ethnicity" (Pomales, Claiborn, & La-Fromboise, 1986, p 122). As a result, counselors who are aware of ethic/cultural differences are perceived as credible sources of help by Black students (Poston, Craine, & Atkinson, 1991).

Implications from this study

       The following implications were drawn based on participant responses to interview protocols utilized in the present study and findings from prior research in the areas of mentoring. The findings from this research can help both students and professionals understand the importance of mentoring, and ways to provide Black male students with opportunities to receive mentorship.

Students

- Black males need encouragement and moral support from family, friends or colleagues when seeking out mentoring relationships. Seeking mentors as early as possible provides students with guidance and helps the student to have a sense of belonging and creating opportunities for success.

- Mentoring programs implemented for Black male success should be extensively publicized in the student body. Identifying Black male students might prove to be an effective method for students most in need. Utilizing the social networks provided by Greek letter organizations can influence mentoring for Black undergraduate males.

- There should be intentional initiatives that expose, involve, and stimulate African American male's educational awareness. The initiatives taken shall increase attainment, matriculation, and higher graduation rates.

Faculty

- Faculty and staff need to be intentional about establishing mentoring. Establish programs designed to highlight the success of African American males' currently having trouble in acquiring the degrees they seek. Mentoring programs should also be designed with the intent to educate African Americans males on how to overcome challenges and

difficulties such as academic, social, structural, and race-based issues they face during the collegiate experience.

- Institutions need to seek Black faculty and staff. The number of Black faculty and staff at predominantly white institutions are few, and students have minimal opportunities of meeting professionals of color. Therefore, institutional leaders should actively seek minority administrators and staff personnel to serve the institution academically but also provide mentoring opportunity for students. Hiring men and women of color would result in an increase in retention of Black students.

Student Affairs Professionals

- Student affairs professionals should consider implementing integrative learning strategies that fact the impact of minority student populations, while simultaneously enhancing the learning outcomes for Black males. Student affairs professionals need to provide leadership development for students and create ways to get Black students engaged in student organizations.

- Student affairs professionals should consult with scholars in the field who have added to the continued research on African American males. Reaching out to these individuals for assistance or perspective about how to address issues of mentoring.

- Having openness to suggestions from the student to address current and future issues. Student affairs professionals must understand the phenome that continues for Black males. University administrators should devote time and sufficient funds to address issues that are historically dated.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should be conducted on how the participants described growing up and how mentoring was perceived during their early stage in life. The current research only intended to focus on mentoring throughout their undergraduate experiences. In addition to the current research, it was intended to have a smaller collection sample, with the hopes of more in depth conversations. For future research, collecting a larger sample of African American males would be suggested because it gives more discussion and experiences from the participants. Future research should replicate this study at different institutions such as, HBCUs and larger institutions. These institutions offer a variety of students who may have different experiences and a different perspective. Furthermore, in future research, the researcher should include not only Black males but perhaps Black and White males and females as well. This allows the researcher to gain multiple perspectives from individuals with different ethnic and racial backgrounds. This research could also be expanded to consider other minority populations in higher education such as Latino, Asian American, and even international students. Lastly, future research should be conducted with trained focus group facilitators. The researcher struggled with receiving narrow responses from the participants and it is suggested the reasoning was because of the preparedness of the research.

Conclusions

This qualitative study was conducted to explore the mentoring relationships of Black male undergraduate students attending a PWI. This study sought to explore if mentoring had an impact on Black males, what effects does mentorship have, how they describe their mentoring relationships, and how satisfied are Black males with their mentoring relationships. The research captured the experience of four participants. Results showed that mentoring has multiple impacts on Black males during their undergraduate experience. These mentoring relationships provided

the participants with guidance, confidence, professional development, and connections to resources that helped them to be more successful during their undergraduate experience. The research conducted revealed that the experiences and knowledge gained from a student's mentoring relationship impacts them not only as student, but as a person in general. The participants throughout this study showed that their mentoring relationships have influenced them to be more intelligent, more involved with organizations and better prepared at life. This study revealed that Black males who are involved with mentoring relationship during their undergraduate experience are likely to be more successful in their academic, personal, and social endeavors.

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Appendix A

Consent to Participants in Research

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Michael Miller, a Graduate student in the department of College Student Affairs, Counseling & Higher Education 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 Black male undergraduate student attending a predominantly White Institution.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to understand the mentoring experiences of black male undergraduate students attending at a PWI.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to interview via Zoom or Microsoft Teams with the researcher to answer questions ranging from demographic information to their mentoring experience. In this study we are interviewing 4 Black males at Eastern Illinois University.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There is not more than a minimal risk expected from participation in this study. Participants may feel uncomfortable sharing their mentoring experience.

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

Participants will have the opportunity to share their mentoring experience and what role it played in their success. Another benefit that may result in this study is gaining new a perspective of their own mentoring relationships.

- **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 deleting all audio used to record the interviews and typed transcriptions will be deleted and shredded as required by law. Recording of the interviews will only be viewed by the interviewer and will be promptly discarded at the end of the study.

- **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 INVESTIGATOR

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

 Email: mdmiller2@eiu.edu Phone: 314-397-4137

• 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

Research Questions and Interview Protocols

1. **What effects does mentorship have on African American males at**

   predominantly white institutions?

- Have you had someone that has guided you throughout your life or during your

   undergraduate experience?

- Do you understand the concept of mentoring?

- Do you feel that mentoring is necessary for students to succeed?

- If so, how is mentoring effective?

- Have you ever been placed in any mentoring programs?

- How much time do you spend with your mentor?

- What has your reality been during the mentoring relationship?

- Do you think that race plays a factor in mentoring?

- During you time at EIU have you had any experiences with mentors who were white?

2. **How do Black males describe their mentoring relationships?**

- Tell me about this relationship.

- How did you meet this person?

- How much time did you spend with your mentor?

- Are you comfortable speaking with your mentor?

- Can you tell me a story about a time they made a difference in your life?

- In what ways did they challenge and support you?

- Are you still in contact?

- Why did you continue to participate in that mentoring relationship?

3. How satisfied are African American males with their mentoring relationships?

- Is your mentorship relationship experience good? If not, what could have made it better?

- How would you describe your relationship with your mentor?

- Has the relationship with your mentor made you more responsible?

- As a mentee how do you perceive the relationship?

- How does your relationship show signs of progress?

- What would you say about your mentor's professional competency?

Appendix C

E-mail Template for Potential Participants

To student,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Michael Miller, a Graduate student in the department of Counseling and Higher Education at Eastern Illinois University, and Mona Davenport, Executive Director for Office of Inclusion and Academic Engagement 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 Black male undergraduate student at Eastern Illinois University. The purpose of this study is to understand the mentoring experiences of Black male undergraduate students attending Predominantly White Institutions.

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, if you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to interview via ZOOM, or Microsoft TEAMS with the researcher to answer questions ranging from demographic information to their mentoring experience. 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 deleting all audio used to record the interviews and typed transcriptions will be deleted and shredded as required by law. Recording of the interviews will only be viewed by the interviewer and will be promptly discarded at the end of the study.

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.

Michael D. Miller

Department of Counseling and Higher Education

Eastern Illinois University